



Why would we be there for them if they're not there for us? They weren't there for us.

Donald Trump on Nato over Iran war

The Daily Star

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

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Bangladesh bled \$68b in 10yrs due to misinvoicing

Says Global Financial Integrity report

- \$32.8 billion flowed to advanced economies
- Annually, illicit outflow was 16% of total foreign trade
- GFI stresses political will to curb customs corruption

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh lost an estimated \$68 billion in illicit financial outflows over a decade between 2013 and 2022, placing it among the top 10 developing Asian countries for discrepancies in their trade with advanced economies.

The Washington-based think tank Global Financial Integrity (GFI) revealed the data in its report "Trade-related Illicit Financial Flows in Developing Asia 2013-2022" released on March 27, highlighting a persistent challenge to the nation's financial stability.

Annually, the amount stands at \$6.8 billion, 16 percent of Bangladesh's trade with the rest of the world, largely caused by trade misinvoicing.

Of the total, around \$32.8 billion flowed to advanced economies, according to the study that analysed data from 24 developing Asian countries across South, East, and Southeast Asia.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

CID brings back \$3.62m sent abroad thru' fraud

TOUSIF KAIUM and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has recovered around \$3.622 million that was collected from people and siphoned abroad through the MTFE scam.

The amount, equivalent to about Tk 44.45 crore, was repatriated last week through the SWIFT banking system to Sonali Bank's principal branch and is expected to be credited to the CID's account today, said Mohammad Bashir Uddin, additional DIG of police.

The funds were deposited on March 14 by Asset Reality Limited, a firm assigned to handle the process of receiving the funds, and routed through JPMorgan Chase Bank to Sonali Bank's head office, a senior CID official said on condition of anonymity.

The money has yet to be credited to CID's account, as additional documentation was sought on March 24, a requirement for transfers exceeding \$20,000.

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4,587 people killed across the countries involved, including civilians and soldiers

4 million people got displaced, 3.2m in Iran, 1m in Lebanon

17 countries got involved in and around the Middle East

2% of global economic growth might be wiped out

85,176 civilian sites damaged in Iran alone, including 282 healthcare facilities, 600 schools and 64,583 homes

1,400 missiles Iran fired at US bases and Israel, causing much damage

10,000 US troops may join around 50,000 troops stationed in the region

ONE MONTH OF WAR

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei among top Iranian leaders killed in US-Israeli strikes

Fuel hoarders face mobile court heat

STAR REPORT

The government has strengthened its drive against fuel stockpiling to tackle the ongoing nationwide crisis, with mobile courts in several districts recovering large quantities of fuel from hoarders and fining them.

In Netrokona, a mobile court of the Kendua upazila administration seized 800 litres of petrol from a shop, Krishi Kotha, at Rampur Bazar on Friday night. The court, led by Kendua UNO Md Rifatul Islam, also fined the shop owner Tk 40,000.

The seized petrol was sold yesterday at a fair price to consumers from the shop, the UNO said.

In Jamalpur, a mobile court recovered 2,500 litres of petrol from a filling station in Sadar upazila yesterday and fined the manager of M/s Jui Enterprise Tk 50,000.

According to locals and officials, the station used to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Govt moves to digitise fuel sale

Plan aims to curb hoarding, ensure proper distribution

ASIFUR RAHMAN and AHMED DEEPTO

The government is moving to introduce a digital fuel supply system – potentially using QR codes or card-based tracking – to regulate nationwide distribution and curb hoarding amid

(BPC).

He told The Daily Star that the plan is to address the issue where some customers collect fuel multiple times from different filling stations, putting unnecessary pressure on supplies.

The move comes as the government

Under the proposed model that is currently under review, fuel purchases would be digitally recorded against individual users or vehicles, allowing authorities to track how much fuel is being collected and from where.

the ongoing supply crunch.

Under the proposed model that is currently under review, fuel purchases would be digitally recorded against individual users or vehicles, allowing authorities to track how much fuel is being collected and from where.

"A committee has already been formed to design the mechanism, with the work currently underway," said Md Rezanur Rahman, chairman of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation

steps up efforts to stabilise fuel distribution amid a combination of global supply uncertainty, import delays, and rising domestic demand.

Once finalised, the system is expected to be rolled out in phases, potentially reshaping how fuel is generally distributed and monitored across the country.

According to BPC data, filling stations nationwide are being supplied from 19

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Iran lauds Pakistan efforts to stop 'aggression'

Zelensky agrees air defence co-op with UAE, Qatar

12 US troops wounded in Iran strike on Saudi base

Rubio says Iran war to last 'weeks not months'

Sources say only a third of Iran's missiles, drones destroyed

Houthis enter the fray

Launch missile at Israel as concern grows over Red Sea shipping; Tehran hits targets in Israel, US bases across the ME after attacks on residential, civilian areas

AGENCIES

Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis launched missiles at Israel yesterday, their first such attack since the start of the Iran war, heightening the risk that a conflict now in its second month could expand further across the region.

Speaking before the strike, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the United States expected to conclude military operations within weeks. The Houthis said they would continue their operations until the "aggression" on all fronts ended.

Meanwhile, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian spoke with Pakistan's prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif, whose government is hosting a meeting with the Turkish and Saudi

foreign ministers today to seek to ease regional tensions.

But there is no sign of an immediate diplomatic breakthrough, and the war, launched with US and Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28, has spread across the Middle East, killing thousands and hitting the world economy with the biggest-ever disruption to global energy supplies.

The intervention of Iran's Yemeni allies into the conflict will spark concern about disruption to Red Sea shipping, with trade from the Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz already choked off.

The Red Sea has become increasingly important during the new war. Saudi Arabia has diverted a large proportion of its oil exports to the Red Sea port of Yanbu, to avoid Hormuz.

Iran's military yesterday said that it had targeted a US logistics vessel near the Omani port of Salalah on the Arabian Sea. Danish shipping giant Maersk said operations had been temporarily suspended after a drone attack injured one worker and damaged a crane.

Yesterday, Israel said it had carried out a wave of attacks on Tehran, targeting what the military said were infrastructure sites belonging to Iran's government.

It also hit targets in Lebanon, where it has resumed its war against Iran-backed Hezbollah, killing three Lebanese journalists in a strike on a media vehicle, Lebanon's Al Manar TV reported, as well as a Lebanese soldier.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Army personnel stand guard at the gate as a fuel truck leaves Meghna Petroleum Ltd's depot at Fatullah in Narayanganj yesterday. The government deployed troops in the depots and key fuel structures across the nation two weeks ago to tighten security.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Shwapno's database hacked, details of 40 lakh customers' at risk

Hackers seek \$1.5m ransom

- Cyber expert warns hacked data risks personal information
- Names, phone numbers, purchase history can increase spam calls
- Using the same number for banking apps raises fraud risk
- Fraudsters may impersonate service providers with those numbers
- Biometric-linked phone numbers are easy targets for attackers

SUKANTA HALDER

The country's largest supermarket chain Shwapno has said hackers breached its customer database and are demanding a ransom of \$1.5 million, or more than Tk 18.3 crore.

The disclosure came after customer names, phone numbers and purchase histories began making round-ups on social media.

Sabbir Hasan Nasir, managing director

of Shwapno, told The Daily Star that hackers had taken control of the company's website and database in December last year.

The attackers were seeking \$1.5 million in exchange for restoring access, he said.

Shwapno has more than 40 lakh registered customers. It runs 812 outlets across 63 districts. The exposed information includes customer names, mobile phone numbers and purchase histories.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Palestinian Authority condemns east Jerusalem evictions

AFP, Ramallah

The Palestinian Authority has condemned the recent eviction of multiple families from their homes in east Jerusalem and urged the international community to take "firm measures" to halt the displacements.

Several families were removed from their homes in the neighbourhood of Silwan in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem on Wednesday, AFP journalists saw.

Silwan has for decades been the target of a policy allowing Jews who lost property before the establishment of Israel in 1948 to reclaim it.

Israeli rights group B'Tselem said the evictions were the start of "a large wave of displacement affecting around 2,200 people" and were part of a policy aimed at "Judaizing the neighbourhood".

In a statement released late on Friday by official news agency Wafa, the PA's foreign ministry "condemned the escalation by Israeli occupation authorities of forced eviction measures".



Travellers wait for vehicles after arriving at Sadarghat terminal by launch early yesterday morning from the southern districts as holidaymakers continue to return to the capital after celebrating Eid.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Indonesia begins enforcing social media ban for under-16s

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesia began enforcing a social media ban for children under the age of 16 on Saturday, after a minister warned digital platforms there was "no room for compromise."

The Southeast Asian nation announced the ban this month citing threats from online pornography, cyberbullying and internet addiction, as concerns grow globally over the impact of social media on children's wellbeing.

Communications minister Meutya Hafid said at a press conference late Friday that digital platforms X and Bigo Live have fully complied with the new rules and adjusted their minimum user age in line with the regulation.

Other digital platforms operating in the country should "immediately align their products, features and services with applicable regulations," Meutya said.

"We reiterate that there is no room for compromise regarding compliance, and that every business entity operating in Indonesia is required to adhere to the laws in force within the country."

TikTok said in a statement late Friday that it was committed to complying with the regulation including "taking appropriate measures related to under-16 accounts" in close consultation with the ministry.

Fuel hoarders

FROM PAGE 1

sell fuel from early morning until around 10:00am before halting sales, citing depleted supplies. Acting on information, a mobile court led by Executive Magistrate BMSR Alif found the fuel stored in 12 drums and later arranged to sell it at a government-fixed price.

In Mymensingh, 19,500 litres of diesel and 4,500 litres of petrol were seized from a mini filling station in Phulpur upazila headquarters yesterday. A court, led by UNO Sadia Islam Shema, fined the owner of Popy Traders Tk 2 lakh.

The seized fuel will be sold through other filling stations at the government-fixed price, she said.

In Kurigram, a mobile court seized 48 litres of petrol from the house of a BNP leader in Dantbhanga village under Roumari upazila on Friday afternoon. The court, led by Executive Magistrate Rafiqur Rahman, fined the house owner's son Tk 10,000 for illegal stockpiling. Abu Jahan is the president of Ward No 4 BNP in Dantbhanga Union.

In Dinajpur, a mobile court raid yesterday recovered 380 litres of diesel and 34 litres of octane from a house in Birganj upazila and sentenced the owner to seven days' non-rigorous imprisonment. Another mobile court in Birol upazila sentenced a man to five days' non-rigorous imprisonment on Friday night for illegally hoarding and selling fuel.

In Gopalganj, a mobile court yesterday recovered around 1,500 litres of petrol and octane from a shop in the Panchuria area of the town and fined its owner Tk 9,000 for illegal storage.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Iqbal Hassan Mahmood conducted a surprise inspection of the Baghabari Oil Depot early yesterday, one of the country's leading fuel supply hubs.

Speaking to journalists, he said the visit aimed to monitor depot operations and fuel distribution.

"We are receiving reports of fuel shortages at filling stations despite regular supply from depots. That is why I have come here to monitor the distribution and supply process," he said.

[Our correspondents from Netrokona, Jamalpur, Mymensingh, Lalmonirhat and Pabna contributed to the report]

Houthis enter the fray

FROM PAGE 1

Iran kept up attacks on Israel and several Gulf states after hitting an air base in Saudi Arabia on Friday and wounding 12 US military personnel, two of them seriously, in one of the most serious breaches of US air defences so far.

Israel, which regularly faced missile attacks from the Houthis before the war, confirmed a missile had been fired at it from Yemen. There were no reports of casualties or damage.

With midterm elections due in November, the increasingly unpopular war has weighed on President Donald Trump's Republican Party, and he has appeared eager to end it soon, while also threatening escalation.

Demonstrators took to city streets across the US yesterday in the third "No Kings" rallies, described by organisers as a call to action against the war on Iran.

Rubio said on Friday that military operations were expected to be concluded in "weeks, not months" and echoed Trump's calls on European

Bangladesh bled \$68b in 10yrs

FROM PAGE 1

It noted Bangladesh's vulnerability to trade-based money laundering, particularly through over-invoiced imports of capital machinery, which enjoys subsidised loans.

Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) are most commonly understood as money or value that crosses borders and is illegal in its source, transfer, or use.

"These flows matter for development and governance because they can weaken domestic resource mobilisation, reduce tax revenue, and constrain the fiscal space required for public services and infrastructure investment," the report said.

It added that larger economies with higher trade volumes show the biggest illicit outflows. China alone accounted for \$6.96 trillion in cumulative trade gaps over the decade, followed by Thailand (\$1.18 trillion) and India (\$1.06 trillion).

Annually, illicit flows accounted for 24.90 percent of China's trade with the world, 21.83 percent for India, 14.83 percent for Bhutan, and 15.49 percent for Nepal.

In December 2024, a white paper by the Bangladesh interim government found an average of \$16 billion was siphoned off annually during the 15 years of Awami League rule.

Although GFI lacked access to Bangladesh's data for 2014, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022, it used available figures to estimate the average.

It noted that some nations show high gaps with regional partners, while countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka reflect that such discrepancies are significantly tied to trade with

Shwapno's database

FROM PAGE 1

However, Nasir could not confirm how much data had been compromised. He said the company is preparing to file a case.

"When I checked the leaked database, I entered my wife's phone number and immediately found her record," said a customer of Shwapno in Dhaka's Gulshan.

Her name, purchase history, and detailed transaction data were all visible. "This is not a theoretical risk; it is real, personal and already exposed. If one record is this accessible, millions of others are equally vulnerable," the customer told The Daily Star.

Shwapno, a subsidiary of ACI, is working with domestic and international forensic experts, as well as the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of police, to investigate the breach and strengthen its cyber defences.

"We want to assure customers

advanced economies.

The report said commodity exports from Asia to advanced economies are often underpriced to evade resource rent taxes, while Asian financial hubs such as Singapore and Hong Kong act as intermediaries in misinvoicing schemes, providing transit hubs or booking centres for illicit trade profits.

In sum, trade misinvoicing with advanced economies is a "critical subset" of Asia's illicit flows, the report said. It shows that while South South trade misinvoicing is significant, the links to G7/OECD markets are "profound and cannot be ignored".

"Any solution will require joint efforts: Asian countries improving their controls and advanced countries tightening oversight of trade transactions, closing legal loopholes, and sharing data," it said.

Prof Selim Raihan of Dhaka University's economics department cautioned that figures on illicit flows may vary because of different methodologies used in different studies.

"The problem is that Bangladesh officially reports trade data very late. This is a major reason why it is difficult to compare official Bangladesh data with what other countries report," he told The Daily Star.

Raihan, also executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling, urged government institutions to engage with partner countries for cross-verification of financial data for curbing illicit flows.

He also stressed the need for a central bank or commerce ministry

system to check whether import prices match global market rates.

He added that many exporters do not bring their earnings to the country, and monitoring agencies must hold them accountable for such illicit practices.

Remittances, too, are used for laundering.

"If the money that should come through official channels comes via Hundi [illegal channels operated by groups], it means large amounts of foreign currency stay outside the country," Raihan said.

The GFI report warned that illicit flows deprive governments of essential revenues, undermine the rule of law, and hamper poverty reduction and infrastructure building.

"In effect, Asia's wealth is being partially siphoned offshore instead of invested at home, at a time when the region still faces significant development needs," it said.

As the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal deadline approaches, the report argued that curbing illicit flows is vital for Asia's prosperity.

"Without political will to tackle corruption within customs and enforce transparency, the nation's wealth will continue to benefit offshore interests rather than its own people," it said.

GFI recommended strengthening customs enforcement, leveraging regional agreements for data sharing, enhancing transparency in free trade zones, and promoting international collaboration to curb illicit financial flows.

as access to a verified contact number makes it easier to impersonate service providers and deceive users, the expert said.

According to the specialist, as banking services become increasingly phone-dependent, both mobile and traditional accounts become more vulnerable if customer data is not properly protected.

The R3sistanc3 member also said that information about the products a customer purchases can be accessed by other companies as lead data.

The greatest risk lies in the phone number, which is collected through biometric methods, making it relatively easy for attackers to obtain a customer's personal information, the expert added.

In the 2024 Global National Cyber Security Index report, Bangladesh secured 35th place among 175 countries, outperforming India, which ranked 36th, and Pakistan, which stood at 85th.

across the Gulf, including Kuwait's International Airport, where drones caused significant damage to its radar system.

Fires were reported near the Khalifa container port in the United Arab Emirates' capital Abu Dhabi, after a missile was intercepted, while in Oman's Salalah port, a worker was injured.

In Iran, media said at least five people were killed in a US-Israeli attack on a residential unit in the northwestern city of Zanjan and in Tehran, the Iran University of Science and Technology was struck.

In Israel, the village of Eshtaol, near Jerusalem, was hit by an Iranian missile. Seven people were hospitalised, Israel's ambulance service said. One Israeli died on Friday.

Meanwhile, Ukraine agreed to cooperate on defence with the UAE and Qatar as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy travelled to both countries amid escalating tensions in the region.

Govt moves to digitise fuel sale

FROM PAGE 1

operational depots, with allocations based on demand and aligned with the average daily year-on-year sales.

But supplies appear inadequate at most pumps, with long queues forming daily and many customers being denied fuel even after waiting for hours.

Though the government has withdrawn the temporary rationing system introduced earlier this month, most filling stations in Dhaka and other districts have been limiting fuel sales to serve more consumers.

Take Rajarbag Service Station near the Malibagh intersection and Ramna Petrol Pump near Matsya Bhaban, which have been capping fuel sales at Tk 200-500 for motorcycles and Tk 1,500-2,000 for cars.

Mohammad Nazmul Haque, owner of Ramna Petrol Pump, noted that many customers queued several times a day and hoped the government would take effective action against hoarding amid the global crisis.

Also president of the Bangladesh Petrol Pump Owners' Association, Nazmul said they have proposed reintroducing rationing. However, they believe limiting sales to two litres for bikes and 10 litres for cars, as in the past, would not work and instead suggested a rationing system using cards issued by local police stations.

While acknowledging the need to curb hoarding, BPC Chairman Rezanur said the government is not returning to a rationing system and explained that a digitised system will ensure transparency in fuel distribution rather than restricting access. "It will be a digital system designed to ensure fair distribution so everyone gets sufficient fuel and hoarding is prevented."

Responding to concerns about accommodating farmers for whom fuel is essential for irrigation, the BPC chairman said the system is being designed with flexibility at the local level.

"We know farmers operate at the upazila level... with certification from local authorities, they will be able to purchase fuel."

The BPC chairman said the proposal is still under review, and no final decision has been taken yet. "Work is already underway... but we still need a little more time."

Meanwhile, the authorities reassured yesterday that the overall fuel stocks are adequate and the irregular distribution and panic-driven buying have disrupted supply at the retail level in recent days.

DRIVES AGAINST HOARDING

The government has strengthened the ongoing countrywide drives against fuel hoarding, deployed Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) personnel at key depots, and introduced tighter

monitoring at petrol pumps.

A decision has been made to appoint "tag officers" at filling stations nationwide to strengthen oversight.

In the Dhaka and Chattogram metropolitan areas, BPC officials will take charge, while in districts, tag officers will be assigned by deputy commissioners and UNOs.

These officials will monitor fuel management and submit daily reports to the Energy and Mineral Resources Division.

Moreover, the BPC has revised fuel distribution hours at depots, bringing them forward by two hours. Dealers will now collect fuel from 7:00am to 3:00pm instead of the previous 9:00am to 5:00pm schedule.

The move is intended to allow filling stations receive fuel earlier.

QUEUES NATIONWIDE

This newspaper yesterday visited around 12 filling stations in the capital's Mohakhali, Malibagh, Ramna and Paribagh and found most of them were limiting fuel sales. All of them had long queues of motorcycles and cars.

Meanwhile, a government monitoring team visited seven filling stations between Asad Gate and Gabtoli yesterday and found repeat customers, especially motorcyclists, driving up octane demand by up to threefold, according to a ministry statement.

The fuel shortage has also gripped multiple districts across the country, including Bandarban, Moulvibazar, Shariatpur, and Narsingdi.

In Bandarban, though the petrol and octane supply were limited to between Tk 200 and Tk 500 for motorcycles at Uzma Oil Filling Station, octane supplies have run out completely. Diesel was also seen to be rationed at several pumps.

In Moulvibazar, filling stations remained largely inactive due to depleted stocks of petrol and octane. Staff reported long periods of idleness, while motorists struggled to find fuel. Diesel is being sold in limited quantities, leaving many vehicles parked.

In Shariatpur, all pumps have largely been closed for two consecutive days, with only half operating on a limited scale. Diesel shortages have particularly impacted fishermen along the Padma River, who now receive only 30-40 percent of their daily fuel requirement, forcing many to remain idle.

In Narsingdi, the crisis mirrors that seen elsewhere. Fuel allocations remain far below daily demand, with petrol supplied only once every three to four days and diesel distributed in limited amounts.

[Our correspondents from Bandarban, Moulvibazar, Shariatpur, and Narsingdi contributed to this report.]

Educationist Dilara Hafiz dies

FROM PAGE 12

Mohammad Abul Hossain Chowdhury and her mother was Karimunnesa Khatun Chowdhury.

She obtained her master's degree in history from the University of Dhaka in 1969 and then began her career as a lecturer at Government Eden College.

Later, she served as principal of Eden College, held positions at Suhrawardy College, and went on to serve as chair of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board and as director general of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education.

President Mohammad Shahabuddin and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, along with opposition leaders, expressed their condolences over Dilara's passing.

Deputy Speaker Kayser Kamal, Chief Whip Nurul Islam, other whips, lawmakers, and officials and staff of the Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat also

expressed deep shock and sorrow.

Expressing profound sorrow, President Shahabuddin, in a condolence message, prayed for the eternal peace of her departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family, reports BSS.

"The nation will remember with gratitude the outstanding contribution of the late Dilara Hafiz in the field of the country's education," he wrote.

In a separate message, Prime Minister Tarique said late Dilara Hafiz was a distinguished educationist and social worker. "With her death, the nation has lost a noble educationist."

Opposition leader and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman conveyed his heartfelt sympathies to the family of the deceased. "As a spouse, she made notable contributions to her family and society, which will be remembered with respect," he added.

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Stand by people, help uphold law and order

Tarique urges BNP men, visits Naya Paltan office for first time as PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairman and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman last night instructed party leaders to stand by the people in addressing the country's ongoing problems, saying people across the country are looking to the party with high expectations.

"People are looking at the party with many hopes. So all leaders and activists here, and across the country, must remain patient and stay within the bounds of law and order," he said.

"There are many problems in the country. We have to explain things to the people, stand by them, and help them remain patient."

Tarique made the remarks from the second-floor balcony of the BNP central office in Naya Paltan while addressing leaders, activists, and supporters of the ruling party.

It was his first visit to the office since taking office as prime minister, and he spent around two hours there.

At about 7:20pm, Tarique got out of his car and entered the office, waving at supporters and activists.

At the entrance, BNP Standing Committee member and Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed welcomed him as thousands of leaders and activists greeted him with applause and slogans.

The large gathering had halted traffic in the area since the afternoon.

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BNP Chairman and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman waves at the crowd after arriving at the party's central office in Nayapaltan yesterday evening. It was his first visit there since assuming office as prime minister. During the visit, Tarique exchanged views with ministers, members of parliament, and party leaders.

PHOTO: PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

Reforms to reflect expectations of the people

Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said the constitu-



tional reforms would give the highest priority to public expectations and the aspirations of those martyred in the student-led mass uprising in 2024.

He also said all amendments would be completed through consensus on the basis of the July National Charter signed by political parties.

"Based on the July National Charter, we will frame everything on a priority basis. The expectations of the people of Bangladesh and the dreams of the martyrs of the July uprising will be given importance there," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Amina Ahmed passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Language Movement veteran and former lawmaker Amina Ahmed passed away yesterday. She was 90.

Amina was the wife of late Prof Muzaffar Ahmed, an adviser to the Mujibnagar Government during the Liberation War in 1971 and president of a faction of the National Awami Party (NAP).

She breathed her last around 11:00am while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Dhaka. She was buried with state honours beside her husband's grave at Elahabad village in Cumilla's Debidwar

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Multilateralism central to our foreign policy

Says foreign minister

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman has said Bangladesh continues



to place multilateralism at the heart of its foreign policy, a stance it has upheld since joining the United Nations in 1974.

The minister made the remarks while addressing a reception hosted by Bangladesh's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York, marking the country's 56th Independence and National Day on Friday.

Reaffirming Dhaka's commitment to global peace and security, he highlighted the country's significant contributions to UN peacekeeping missions and its sustained humanitarian support for the Rohingya people.

"Over the past five

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

2003 MV NASRIN-1 CAPSIZE

Victim families await compensation

Appeal against HC verdict pending with apex court

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

It has been nine years since the High Court delivered a verdict directing authorities to provide compensation to families of victims of the capsizing of Launch MV Nasrin-1 in 2003.

However, the families have yet to receive any payment as compensation, as an appeal against the HC's judgement in the case remains pending with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, despite no stay order being issued on the HC verdict.

MV Nasrin-1, a Bhola-bound triple-decker from Dhaka that was deemed unfit, capsized with 700 on board at the confluence of Padma, Meghna and Dakatia rivers in Chandpur on July 8, 2003, leaving 110 people dead, about 200 missing and many others injured.

The launch owner also died in the incident, according to a

AT A GLANCE

9yrs after HC verdict, victim families yet to be compensated

Appeal remains pending with SC, although no stay order was issued

Launch capsized left 110 dead, around 200 missing, and many others injured

HC ordered Tk 17.11cr in compensation for 170 deceased, one injured victim

government investigation report.

Following the launch accident, the deputy commissioner of Chandpur published a list of 400 people who were affected by the incident. Accordingly, the shipping

and disaster trustee boards gave Tk 15,000-20,000 to the families of the injured and deceased persons.

In 2004, on behalf of the victims, BLAST filed a case with the 3rd Joint District Judge's Court of Dhaka, claiming that the compensation was inadequate. More than Tk 28.93 crore was demanded as compensation in the case, where the number of the deceased was mentioned as 171. The case was sent to the 7th Joint District Judge's Court in 2012.

In its verdict on February 2, 2016, the Dhaka court asked the government to give Tk 17.11 crore to the families of the affected people -- 170 deceased and one injured -- within 60 days.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and the launch owners' association filed a revision petition against the verdict on October 24, 2016.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Politicisation clouds youth understanding of Liberation War

Say speakers at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Liberation War has been politicised for so long that many young Bangladeshis are growing up confused about what freedom really means, speakers said yesterday.

They also called for a more open, inclusive, and rights-based understanding of independence.

They made the remarks at the unveiling of the Independence Day issue of Tiffin, a children's and youth magazine, and a discussion titled "The aspiration for independence through the eyes of the younger generation", held at the Bishwo Shahitto Kendro in Dhaka.

"If we do not understand individual freedom, it will be difficult to understand the collective freedom we speak of afterwards," said Saimum Parvez, special assistant to the BNP chairperson's Foreign Affairs Advisory Committee.

He said independence alone was not enough if citizens did

not enjoy freedom of expression, civic liberty, and protection from arbitrary restrictions.

He also cautioned against attempts to pitch the July uprising against the Liberation War.

Prime Minister's Adviser Zahed Ur Rahman said the history of the Liberation War had too often been confined to a single narrative.

"We are trying to lock the history of the Liberation War into a fixed frame, where nothing can be said beyond it," he said.

Zahed said the key issue was whether the state allowed room for open historical inquiry, adding that the struggle to ensure equality, dignity, social justice, rule of law, and fundamental rights remains unfinished.

"We have come to a point where many people do not even know what their aspirations should be, or what they should be asking from the state," he said, adding that freedom must also mean the right to live without intimidation.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

'Clean schools, no mosquitoes' DNCC launches dengue prevention drive in 536 educational institutions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To curb dengue risks among students, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) yesterday launched a special cleanliness and mosquito-control campaign across 536 educational institutions under its jurisdiction.

The initiative comes as schools, colleges, and madrasas reopen after the Eid holidays -- a period when stagnant water in unused premises can increase the breeding of Aedes mosquitoes.

The campaign, titled "Clean School, No Mosquito", was inaugurated at Dhaka Residential Model School and College by DNCC Administrator Md Shafiqul Islam Khan.

"Educational institutions are reopening after a long closure. This programme is being conducted with special emphasis on preventing Aedes mosquito breeding on campuses," he said.

He also stressed the need for public

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

TANGAIL TRAIN TRAGEDY Gaibandha villages mourn 5 lives cut short Most victims were RMG workers returning to Dhaka after Eid holidays



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A shadow of grief fell over Nizpara village in Gaibandha's Sadullapur upazila yesterday as residents gathered to bury four of their own.

The deceased -- Nargis Begum, 35; her son Md Nirob, 11; Sultan Mahmud, 25; and Ripa Khatun, 20 -- were among five people run over by a train at Kalihati upazila in Tangail on Friday night.

The fifth victim, Dola Begum, 35, was from Chatragachha village of Sadullapur upazila.

Heart-wrenching scenes unfolded when the bodies arrived yesterday morning, with relatives and neighbours crowding for a final glimpse.

Police in Tangail said passengers of a Dhaka-bound bus had stepped off after the driver pulled over on the highway when the vehicle ran out of fuel. Some sat on the nearby railway tracks, where the Sirajganj Express struck them.

Sub-Inspector Mizanur Rahman of Tangail Railway Station outpost said the bodies were handed over to families late Friday night.

Relatives said most of the victims were garment workers returning to Dhaka after the Eid holidays.

Ripa's father, Abdur Rashid, a marginal farmer, broke down in tears. She had been working for four years to support the family.

"I had hoped to arrange her marriage soon, but those dreams are now shattered," Rashid said.

Sultan was the sole breadwinner of his family, as his elderly father is unable to work.

Side-by-side graves were dug for Nargis and her son Nirob.

In Chatragachha, neighbours said Dola had just celebrated her only daughter's wedding during the Eid holidays before heading back to work.

Family members said the victims were buried after Zohr prayers.

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Rubaiyat Jamil passes away

CITY DESK

Entrepreneur Rubaiyat Jamil, founder and CEO of ICE Technologies, has passed away. He was 46.



He breathed his last after collapsing during a cricket match in Chattogram's Hathazari on Friday.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held today after Zohr prayers at Gulshan Azad Mosque. He will later be laid to rest at Banani Graveyard.

He was the only son of late Mahbub Jamil, former special assistant to the chief adviser in 2008-09 and chairman of Singer Bangladesh Ltd.

Rubaiyat was a young entrepreneur involved in multiple startups.

He was a former director of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka, and an active member of International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh, and German Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

He is survived by his mother, sister, wife, three daughters, and a host of relatives and friends.

11-year-old girl raped, murdered in Ctg: police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police recovered the body of an 11-year-old girl from a warehouse in Chattogram's Hathazari upazila yesterday.

The victim, Afrin Aktar, a madrasa student, was missing for two days, said police.

Police suspect that she was raped before being murdered and later dumped inside the warehouse.

Kazi Tarek Aziz, additional superintendent of police (Hathazari circle), told The Daily Star, "One eye of the victim was gouged out, and her face was covered in blood."

"She had been missing since Thursday after going out of her house. Today (yesterday), locals found a foul smell coming out from a cotton warehouse. There they discovered the body and later informed police," he said.

CCTV footage shows that a man identified as Faisal, a day labourer and neighbour of the victim, took the girl into the warehouse and left by himself after some time.

During the inquest, circumstantial evidence suggested that she may have been raped before death. This will be confirmed following an autopsy, added the official.

The body has been sent to CMCH morgue, he said. Police are trying to arrest the suspect, he added.



Bikers scuffle while standing in a long queue to collect fuel at a filling station in the capital's Paribagh area yesterday. Police had to intervene to bring the situation under control.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Staff shortage leaves 7 maternity centres non-operational

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Seven fully equipped Mother and Child Welfare Centres across four upazilas in Patuakhali district have remained non-operational for years due to an acute shortage of manpower.

As a result, expectant mothers, new mothers, and children are being deprived of essential healthcare services.

According to sources at the Health Engineering Department, the 10-bed facilities were built at a total cost of Tk 32.14 crore, one in Patuakhali Sadar, three in Bauphal, two in Galachipa, and one in Mirzaganj, to ensure easy access to healthcare for women and children. Although construction work was completed between 2018 and 2022 and the facilities were handed over to the Family Planning Department, services have yet to begin due to a lack of the required staff.

Each centre has been equipped with 10 beds, Caesarean section facilities, and other necessary medical equipment, all of which remain idle and locked inside, collecting dust and raising concerns over possible damage.

Each facility is supposed to have two medical officers, four family planning inspectors, one office assistant, and two ward assistants. However, none of these posts has been filled at any of the centres so far.



Md Rafiqul Islam, executive engineer of HED in Patuakhali, said the centres were built on land donated by locals.

"Each centre has a three-storey building with necessary equipment installed, along with separate residential facilities for doctors and staff. However, the centres could not be made operational so far due to a lack of manpower," he said. During a recent visit, this correspondent

found the centres at Bhayla in Patuakhali Sadar and Sabupura in Bauphal lying unused.

Shawon Molla, a resident of Bhayla village, said the centre was built in 2018 on land donated by his family in the name of his grandfather. "If the centre were operational, women and children in the village could have easier access to treatment. Now, they have to travel nearly 10 kilometres to Patuakhali town, which is often difficult for critical patients due to poor transport facilities," he said.

Md Ibrahim, imam of a local mosque, said, "It is unacceptable that a well-built facility is not serving its purpose while people are being deprived of healthcare."

Runa Akter, a family planning inspector at a nearby facility, said that if the centre were made functional through the appointment of necessary staff, it would benefit local people and reduce pressure on upazila and district-level hospitals.

Md Shahidul Islam, deputy director of the Family Planning Department in Patuakhali, acknowledged the issue.

"We have regularly informed the higher authorities of the matter through monthly reports, but without the recruitment of staff, it is not possible to start services at the centres," he said.

Reforms to reflect expectations Politicisation clouds youth

FROM PAGE 3

The minister made the remarks while replying to queries after attending the passing out parade of the 43rd BCS police batch at the Bangladesh Police Academy in Sardah, Rajshahi.

Asked whether late president Ziaur Rahman's name would be included in the Constitution as the declarer of independence, Salahuddin said a constitutional reform committee would be formed, and the matter would be discussed there in detail.

He also said the issues recognised in the July Charter as a document of political consensus would be given priority when the committee prepares its

draft, before a final decision is taken in the parliament.

Earlier, addressing the event, the home minister congratulated the members of the 43rd BCS police batch on completing their training successfully and wished them success in their professional and personal lives.

"This uniform is not only a symbol of power, but it is a symbol of responsibility, sacrifice, and service," he said, urging them to devote themselves to serving the country with honesty, courage, and humanity, and help build a people-friendly and reform-oriented police force in a discrimination-free new Bangladesh.

The government is working to establish merit

and seniority as the only standards in recruitment, transfer, and promotion through an independent and strong Police Reform Commission, he added.

The minister also said the outdated British-era law was being replaced with a law suited to the time.

Mentioning that the police force was not satisfied with the current uniform, the minister said the government would discuss the matter at the highest policymaking level so that the force could get back to one of its previous suitable uniforms.

The batch, which began training on March 1, 2025, had 72 trainees and the best performers from the batch across different categories were given medals.

FROM PAGE 3

Bulbul Siddiqi, professor at North South University, echoed concerns over politicisation and called for an evidence-based approach to Liberation War history in research and textbooks.

Network for People's Action member Anik Roy said independence would remain incomplete without economic security, jobs, healthcare, and education.

Filmmaker Syeda Nilima

Dola said the Liberation War was "a shared past" but had been used over the last 15 years as a one-party political tool.

Journalist Rafsan Galib said the values of independence — equality, human dignity, and social justice — are clear but remain unrealised in practice.

Saiyed Abdullah said freedom should mean a country where people of different beliefs and identities can coexist

without fear.

Bangladesh Open University Associate Professor Adnan Arif Salim said freedom should also be reflected in labour rights, dignity, and safety.

Earlier, Tiffin Editor Sujaul Islam Sumon said the magazine aims to encourage children and teenagers to read beyond textbooks and engage with history, literature, science, and other subjects.

Md Abul Hashem, professor at Bangladesh Agricultural University, and Rumana Paarveen Annie, assistant professor at Dhaka University, also spoke at the programme, which was conducted by Sadik Mahmud.

Clean schools

FROM PAGE 3

awareness, adding that collective efforts are required to build a liveable, mosquito-free, and odour-free city.

DNCC Chief Health Officer Brig Gen Imrul-Quais said prolonged school closures had led to poor maintenance in many institutions.

Under the programme, DNCC will carry out a coordinated three-day mosquito control operation.

Officials said all potential sources of stagnant water will be removed or destroyed. Larviciding and adulticiding will also be conducted in classrooms, school premises, and surrounding areas.

Awareness campaigns will also be held to educate students about dengue prevention and the risks posed by Aedes mosquitoes.

Experts warned that Aedes mosquito eggs can survive for long periods, and with the dengue virus still present, rainfall can create new breeding sites. Without proper

preventive measures — especially after the Eid vacation — the risk of mosquito proliferation increases, they said.

Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University, urged residents to take precautions before leaving home.

"Any place where water can accumulate must be emptied. No container should be left where rainwater can collect, as it can become a breeding site for Aedes mosquitoes," he said.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman stressed the need for proactive measures.

"Authorities should use environmentally safe BTI insecticides to control Aedes mosquitoes, but their application is often neglected. Even light rainfall can trigger a rise in dengue cases, as the first generation of mosquitoes helps the population grow. Early BTI application can prevent their spread," he said.

Jamuna's erosion intensifies in Jamalpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Erosion by the Jamuna River has intensified in Dewanganj upazila of Jamalpur over the past month, leaving vast stretches of cropland, homes, and several government establishments under threat.

Locals said that while the erosion has been continuing for the past three months, it turned severe last month, devouring at least 100 houses, several hundred acres of cropland, and around 100 metres of the key Dewanganj-Kholabari road along the riverbank in the upazila.

Shukkur Ali, 65, a resident of the Kholabari area, said he had previously lost his homestead to Jamuna erosion seven times, along with almost all of his ancestral land. "It has swallowed my house yet again. How many times shall I have to suffer this ordeal?" he lamented in a trembling voice.

Shamim, another local resident, said the ongoing erosion has severely disrupted communication in the area by damaging rural roads.

"Many educational institutions have either already been devoured by the river or are now at risk," he added.



Farmer Lutfar Mia said his maize and chilli fields were entirely lost to the river. "It has left me destitute."

Nazma Khatun, a housewife, said, "Before the elections, many people came with promises, but now no one is to be seen."

Locals expressed concern that, unless urgent measures are taken, four government establishments, a mosque, more houses, and vast tracts of cropland may soon be lost to the river.

Md Nakibuzzaman Khan, executive engineer of the Bangladesh Water Development Board in Jamalpur, said the erosion had intensified along a 1.5 kilometre stretch of the riverbank after a sandbar emerged along the opposite bank of the Jamuna.

"We carried out riverbank protection work along 157 metres during the last flood. A proposal has recently been sent for another 220 metres of temporary protection work," he added.

Multilateralism

FROM PAGE 3

Bangladesh has successfully overcome decades, Bangladesh has successfully overcome significant challenges and achieved remarkable socio-economic progress through constructive engagement in line with the principles of the UN Charter," he said as chief guest.

The event was attended by around 150 permanent representatives, senior UN officials, diplomats, and members of international organisations. Messages from dignitaries were read out, and a documentary on the significance of Independence Day was screened.

In his welcome address,

Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Salahuddin Noman Chowdhury, said March 26 symbolises the enduring triumph of the people's will, dignity, and freedom.

Bangladesh missions abroad also marked the day.

In Nepal, Ambassador Shafiqur Rahman reaffirmed Dhaka's commitment to strengthening bilateral ties, expressing optimism over deeper cooperation under Nepal's new leadership.

Vice President Ram Sahaya Prasad Yadav attended the programme as chief guest.

Amina Ahmed

FROM PAGE 3

Chhatra upazila after Maghrib prayers, said Ismail Hossain, a senior member of the NAP central committee.

Amina left behind her only daughter, Ivy Rahman, now president of NAP, to mourn her demise. She was a former president of NAP and also a praesidium member of the party's current executive committee.

Political parties, including NAP, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), and

Chhatra Union, as well as many individuals, expressed deep shock at her death and extended sympathy to the bereaved family.

Amina actively participated in the Language Movement of 1952 while she was a student at Eden College. She was a leader of Chhatra Union and served as vice-president of the Eden College Students' Union. She was elected a lawmaker in the reserved women's seats in 2009 and 2014.

Victim families await

FROM PAGE 3

The HC on June 5, 2017, rejected the petition and upheld the lower court judgement, ordering BIWTA and the launch owners' association to pay a total of Tk 17.11 crore in compensation to victims' families.

Each family of the deceased would get Tk 10 lakh, and every injured victim would get Tk 1 lakh, the HC ruled.

BITWA and the launch owners' association jointly filed a leave-to-appeal petition with the SC's Appellate Division in 2019, seeking a stay on the HC verdict.

The chamber judge of the SC on September 2, 2019, sent the petition to its full bench and set March

8, 2020, for hearing.

However, the apex court has not held any hearing on the petition as the lawyers concerned did not take any extensive initiative to this end.

Advocate Ishrat Hossain, a lawyer for the petitioners, said her clients will not give any further compensation until the SC disposes of the petition and issues directives, as her clients had given money to the victim families immediately after the incident.

Contacted, ZI Khan Panna, a lawyer for Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), which is a party in the case on behalf of the victims, said he was unsure whether BITWA and the launch owners' association have

given any compensation to victim families, as an appeal filed by them is pending with the SC's Appellate Division.

"We will fight for upholding the HC verdict when the Appellate Division holds hearing on the appeal," he said, adding that such naval accidents take place due to violation of the relevant provisions of law.

PRAYER TIMING					
MARCH 29					
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
JAMAAT 4-45	12-45	4-45	6-20	7-45	
5-20	1-15	5-00	6-25	8-15	

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Higher Education Acceleration & Transformation (HEAT)
Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Extreme Heat in Dhaka City:
A Framework for Resilience to Heat Stress
(SP 13010)

SPM Office, Department of Geography and Environment, University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000
Memo No. HEAT/13010/SPMO/51 Date: 28 March 2026

e-Tenders are invited on the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following goods under HEAT Sub-Project (PIN – 13010) titled "Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Extreme Heat in Dhaka City: A Framework for Resilience to Heat Stress" for the Department of Geography and Environment, University of Dhaka.

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Description	Online tender notice publication date	Online tender closing date
1218344	DU/PIN 13010/G3	Procurement of Computer Software	31-March-2026	13-April-2026

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal, and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from the e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Professor Dr. Md. Humayun Kabir
Sub Project Manager (SPM), SP 13010

GD-654

How Trump is destroying the international order



YUSEF SY RAMADAN

The most dangerous aspect of the shifting landscape of US foreign policy is not just the expansion of its warmongering tendencies, but the exposure of the fragility of the global leadership it claims to have absolute power over.

In the moments when the maps of the world shake, the danger of war is not only in the missiles, but in the minds that run them, in the language that justifies them, and in the level of political and moral consciousness among those who sit in the rooms where the decisions are made. Donald J Trump — who is supposed to be driving the most powerful military machine in the world — was allegedly “shocked,” at Iran’s retaliation, and is now dramatically weighing on escalating the war in Iran, while also pushing for diplomacy. Trump’s unpredictability indicates an aversion to analyse facts that will minimise the heavy casualties and costs of warfare on his own people and the international community.

Trump treats war as if it is a show of force to determine which countries’ futures can be controlled from a fortified operations’ room. But history teaches us that wars, especially in areas saturated with complexity, enmities and fragile balances, do not go according to the wishes of those who ignite them. When Trump reportedly admits that he did not anticipate the targeting of other Gulf nations, the question is not only about the efficiency of the administration, but about the ability of this leadership to understand the nature of the world it deals with.

In the midst of talking about a wider war, casualties, mutual targeting and a global energy crisis, the US President suddenly moves on to talk about another country, Cuba, its weather,

and then utters “friendly takeover,” and states, “I can do whatever I want with it.” Trump’s repeated utterances of words like “takeover,” is not an expression of a momentary emotion nor is it an indicator of one man’s instability. It is a clear pattern of thinking expanded from the historical, imperialist mindset ingrained in US governance. But the logic of naked force is no longer just a mental background of politics. It has become direct discourse, based on which the fate of the world is intertwined.

Trump’s arrogant language reflects contempt for the idea of international

administration is trying to calm markets and public opinion by promoting secret diplomatic contacts aimed at stopping the escalation. When the statements of the authority become externally and internally questioned, and when the official discourse appears as a tool to calm investors, not to describe reality as it is — we become faced with a management that does not have a clear strategy. The Trump administration’s “management” of its country and foreign policy, is of impressions, manufacturing temporary narratives to sustain itself.

However, the real price of all

politically and psychologically. The US President seems more preoccupied with mocking and bullying his opponents in degrading personal attacks, than facing questions about the explosive situation in the Middle East and its mechanisms, including its impact on the US.

We are witnessing one of the harshest aspects of contemporary political leadership: the transformation of the highest position in the state into an escape from accountability. Donald Trump has depicted the death of US military personnel as, “part of war.” We are not only witnessing a lack of sympathy, but a breakdown in the moral

question: is there really a real strategy governing the US’ behaviour, or has war become a series of improvisations and attempts to take attention away from internal governance failure that unfolds day after day? Many indications suggest that we are seeing an authority that is trying to cover up its inability to perform, and hide its absence of vision with more shocking statements, using the verbal chaos as a veil over the actual chaos.

The world is not managed by the logic of improvised comments, as major crises cannot withstand this level of lightness. The Middle East is not the scene for electoral messaging. Cuba is not a geopolitical joke. Oil markets are not just a screen that can be deceived forever, and the lives of soldiers and civilians are not a minor detail in the bigger picture. When the tendency to produce verbal shock value results in military decisions, the danger becomes doubled, because war is not only the result of a conflict of interests, but also the result of personal ego and a desire to impose muscle power at any cost.

The most dangerous thing in the shifting landscape of US governance is not just the expansion of its warmongering tendencies, but the exposure of the fragility of the global leadership it claims to have absolute power over. Wars can sometimes be contained, and crises may find their exits after a high cost, but the real disaster begins when the decision-making itself becomes a source of chaos, and when the leader of a superpower experiments with the boundaries of his authority. At that point, the world witnesses a defect that makes all its entities — allies, opponents, markets and people — prisoners of the mood of one individual who does not seem to be fully aware of the war he launched, nor where it can end. If we continue to see more of the current pattern, the danger threatens not only one region, but the entire international order, because in this case the world becomes hostage to volatile decisions and political whims that may at every moment, open a new door to a greater disaster.

Yousef SY Ramadan is the Palestine Ambassador to Bangladesh.



US President Trump said he was “shocked” at Iran’s retaliation, as if experts never warned against military misadventures in the Middle East.

PHOTO: AFP

law, a disregard for the sovereignty of other nations, and a disregard for the consequences of any new forms of reckless leadership. When powerful nations begin to believe the myth of their absolute power, they enter the phase of regression. Every force that imagines that it can open additional fronts while it is unable to manage the existing front, reveals a growing separation between discourse and reality.

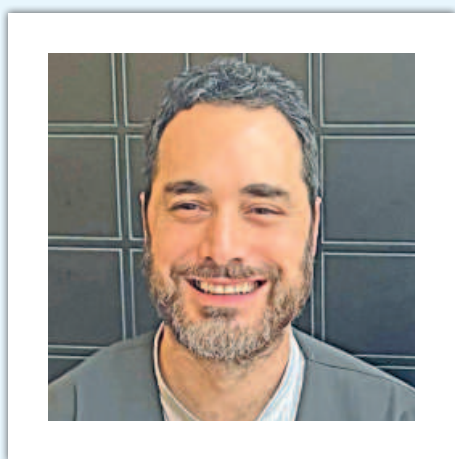
At the same time, the US

this confusion is not paid in press conferences or in screens, but on the ground, in the bodies of soldiers, in cities at risk, in diplomatic missions that turn into targets, and in human lives that pay the cost of reckless wars. Reports about the perils of US soldiers, and the targeting of embassies, hotels and allied countries, confirm that the issue is no longer just a containable crisis, but has become an explosive reality that expands the field — both

sense of responsibility. A democratic leader does not run away from difficult questions. A democratic leader does not underestimate death. A democratic leader faces results, recognises the cost, and respects people’s right to know the truth.

The landscape drawn by Trump’s recent actions is that of a troubled capital, a confused leadership, and a foreign policy that moves reactively. From there arises a fundamental

‘US and Israel’s aggression is a sign of desperation’



Dr Bashir Saade, lecturer at University of Sterling and author of “Hizbollah and the Politics of Remembrance,” speaks to Ramisa Rob, Geopolitical Insights Editor of The Daily Star about Israeli operations in Lebanon and Middle East, and what strategic victory means for the US and Israel against Iran and Hezbollah.

Can you explain how the geopolitical dynamics changed in the Middle East since October 7, 2023?

There have been major transformations in the rules of the game. The Lebanese government is allied with the US, and has been indirectly bidding for Israel, and pushing to demilitarise Hezbollah. When the US and Israel decided to act on Iran — which was planned for years — it strategically coincided with an Israeli intervention in Lebanon against Hezbollah. The ground invasion in Lebanon, and possibility of boots on the ground in Iran, is most important to follow, in order to understand how this will unfold.

On the internal political front, the US-allied Lebanese government is currently asking for the start of negotiations of peace with Israel, including normalising

relations with Israel. Very expectedly, Israel has refused to negotiate for peace with Lebanon. Israel never wanted peace, as it doesn’t suit Israel’s interests.

Since October 7, the US and Israel have decided that the resistance coalition has to be neutralised or eliminated. It is not viable for the US and particularly Israel to have the resistance coalition exist as a political actor. In politics, you either negotiate and recognise the other as an existing actor and try to compromise, or you reach a point where you decide that taking them out with force as such, would have a better outcome. For the US and Israel, the idea is clearly to create some kind of a ground for regime change in Iran, as we’re seeing with targeted killings, so that there is no entity such as the Revolutionary Guard anymore. The regime change entails a US-friendly government in Iran.

Is a US-aligned government a possibility in Iran after this war?

History shows that most regimes, groups, and political actors don’t only survive when they have equal power to the attacking force. They survive through asymmetric means. It is true that Iran and Hezbollah are no match for the US and Israeli army and their technological, military capabilities. But they can fight wars that exhaust Israel and US’ capabilities. So that is what both Iran and Lebanon are continuing to bet on. They are also betting on the paralysis of the world economy, to the Gulf countries, which make up the most important region for wealth accumulation for the world economy. It’s not just because of oil and gas, but also financial markets. Most of the US currency is actually Gulf money. This is why the current war, as labelled by many commentators, is a war of attrition, that bleeds the enemy as much as possible till the enemy feels that they cannot “afford” this anymore.

How long is war on all fronts, sustainable for the US and Israel and Hezbollah and Iran?

There’s talks that Israel is considering the usage of nuclear weapons in Iran, which would be a disaster. Israel is desperate. Iran is huge in land mass and the killing

of leaders and top officials cannot lead to quick change. Hezbollah is in a different situation of course, but as long as there is someone hiding behind a mountain or valley in the south of Lebanon, it’s hard to fully eliminate them. Israel is trying to occupy the south of Lebanon; it may succeed, but it is facing fierce resistance. One of the issues with the wars that the US and Israel are waging in the region — even in Gaza with Hamas — is that eliminating resistance groups is not practical. Their enemy is an ideological one, fighting against injustice, occupation and Israel’s machinations which have broken their families. People are not going to go away. If someone is killed in a family, his son will fight, or his cousin will fight — and so on. When the US and Israel become aggressive, it’s a sign of weakness that they’re not succeeding in hitting where they hope to. Even in Gaza, the narrative is that Hamas is decimated. Hamas’ leadership may be gone, but Hamas still exists underground. Their idea as a resistance faction continues to survive. Total destruction of the Gaza Strip has been achieved but is there really a strategic victory for Israel? Something similar may happen to Lebanon. Israel wants to transform the south and parts of Beirut into a new Gaza and colonise.

The only way to deal with such an enemy for the US and Israel is through political compromise, which they don’t wish to do as Hezbollah and the Iranian regime are some of the only ones in the world rejecting US and Israel’s colonial efforts.

Hezbollah and Iran are in it for existential reasons so they will fight until everybody is dead. They don’t care. They’re waiting to die as the martyrdom culture is very strong. From what’s happening recently, it does seem to me that the US is reconsidering. For the war in Lebanon, it’s possible that it would last longer than the one in Iran. The more you corner an arrogant enemy, like the US and Israel, they start using other means of destruction. Israel starts bombing civilian infrastructure. The main doctrine that Israel operates on — which is different to the US — is really spreading terror by calling their enemies “terrorists.” The idea

in Lebanon is to create a complete state of disarray, displacement of the people within the country, spreading mayhem and chaos. The strategy here is that spreading terror will lead to a change of heart. It’s partly working, as many Lebanese people are saying, “We know that Israel is a monster, so why should we poke that monster anymore when we’re suffering?” That sort of mentality is dexterously engineered by Israel.

Now, we’re in the last war, really. Maybe it will lead to a partial neutralisation of the resistance coalition. It is set to be a long war, unless something tactically new happens in the next few weeks that would change the rules of the game from existence and survival for Iran and Hezbollah. But there’s a fundamental issue with what the US and Israel view as strategic victory. There’s always been a resistance against Israel historically. There will always be resistance against any form of injustice, even if neutralised now.

What do you make of the “narrative victory” that Trump is trying to paint?

Half of this war is media warfare. There’s been fake reports that Netanyahu died, and fake videos of him, in general. He was alive but he entertained mystery during that period when the false reports were emerging. All of this creates psychological warfare — what we call “psyop.” Essentially, you spread news that will change the way the war is happening, such as one party saying we’ve conquered this part of the area, so the opponent has to shift their plans. Using misinformation to change military strategy is another expertise of Israel, for decades. Iranians are also trying to do the same. But it’s also commentators, influencers and the general public in social media who participate in the large-scale spread of misinformation about the trajectory of the war. Today, we are all involved in warfare with every single video we consume, like, or share. Take Trump’s catchy declarations and slogans for example. They don’t need to mirror any form of reality. But the danger is that they become reality because people start thinking in a certain way.

What about the role of intelligence?
There has been a continuity of antagonism

towards Iran in what we call the “deep state,” of the US, across all governments. The intelligence community, I think, are in agreement with Trump over this war. In the case of Hezbollah, it’s even more simple. Hezbollah will always be a US enemy as they attacked US interests in the 80s, and the US never forgets. There’s a documentary on the CIA chasing Hezbollah fighters for years, until the CIA and Mossad killed one of them, Imad Mughniyeh in 2008. This is the mentality of the US and Israeli intelligence community: to chase with force until beating them.

The assassination of leaders is done by intelligence and as we are seeing, Mossad and CIA work relentlessly to penetrate all the resistance groups. But targeting leaders or civilian structures simply does not solve the problem. The resistance will continue in cycles. At some point, if Israel wants to compromise, they have to completely rethink what they’re doing in the region as a political project, which they are not willing to do.

Do you think this war would be a wake-up call for the international community?

There is really no international community anymore. Europe is spineless. The US is captured by radical, pro-Zionist thinking. Meanwhile, the rest of the world — Russia and China, for example — is waiting to see how the empire of the US will slowly crumble. There never was an international system holding it all together. We’re in a more turbulent phase, where Russia has been bogged down in a war in its backyard, and China is in economic warfare with the US. So the Middle East is really the place where the battle is happening, because a project like Israel is a strong, destabilising force that the US empire can use to maintain its stronghold. Israel can be a ruthless criminal willing to do anything, for their survival. Maybe Israeli leaders think if they kill everybody, they can live in peace. But no project historically has survived on a mountain of injustice. Every project like Israel has ended up collapsing. Can we name one tyrant in the history of humanity that didn’t fall eventually?

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Unemployment hindering progress

Create jobs and skills opportunities for youth urgently

With 33 percent of its population aged between 18 and 35, Bangladesh faces a pressing challenge: creating enough jobs for its youth. Unfortunately, joblessness is on the rise, with around 55 lakh young people aged 15 to 24 being economically inactive. This reality is a major threat to Bangladesh's development. The consequences are visible in a surge of teenage gang violence, substance abuse, online gambling, urban crime, and gender-based harassment and violence. A recent policy paper by the General Economics Division (GED) lays out the scale of the crisis and, crucially, how these risks are interconnected. Youth marginalisation and limited access to economic opportunity are at the root of these overlapping problems.

Young people aged 15 to 18 years are particularly vulnerable. An estimated 83 lakh young people are affected by substance abuse. At the same time, online gambling is expanding rapidly as idle youth look for ways to make a quick buck or kill time, many becoming addicted. More than 50 lakh people are already involved, and this number could exceed a staggering two crore by 2027 if left unchecked. Rising urban violence is another warning sign. In 2024, nearly 50 youth gangs were active in Dhaka alone, involved in drug peddling, extortion, and other crimes. Similar patterns are emerging outside the capital. The links are cyclical: gang involvement often leads to substance abuse, which in turn deepens ties to criminal networks. Breaking this cycle requires urgent and coordinated action. Otherwise, what should have been a demographic dividend could turn into a demographic burden.

Meanwhile, current interventions fall far short. Existing training programmes reach only 3.64 percent of economically inactive youth, leaving the vast majority without pathways to employment. In terms of curbing drug addiction among the youth, government plans to add 1,679 rehabilitation beds will help only a fraction of the 83 lakh individuals affected by addiction.

The GED report should be treated as a wake-up call. Bangladesh must place youth development at the centre of its policymaking. This means rethinking employment strategies by creating public works programmes such as environmental cleanups, expanding part-time jobs for students, and scaling up vocational training. Polytechnic institutions need urgent reform, with better teachers and updated curriculum aligned with market demands. At the same time, labour markets should diversify to open doors to higher-paying jobs, both domestically and abroad. Addressing substance abuse will require a parallel expansion of affordable rehabilitation and counselling services. Law enforcement must act against gang activity. Rehabilitation-focused detention and reintegration programmes are essential to help young people rebuild their lives.

There must also be widespread awareness campaigns to teach parents how to nurture their teenage children, to sensitise teachers and youth leaders to be mentors, and to educate young people on the consequences of substance abuse, online gambling, and criminal behaviour. Young people must be made to feel valued by the government, their families, and society. Bangladesh's youth remains its greatest asset, if given the opportunity to thrive.

Early action a must to curb mosquito spread

Authorities must be proactive

It is deeply concerning that the mosquito problem, once seasonal, is becoming a year-round challenge across the country, largely thanks to inadequate and scattered efforts from the authorities concerned. A recent report published by this daily highlighted the dismal situation in Khulna city, where the mosquito population is seeing an increase as temperatures climb. According to Khulna City Corporation (KCC), 56 people are currently engaged in spraying and other anti-mosquito activities, while over 300 cleaners are working to clean up common breeding grounds such as drains and bushes. A Tk 823 crore project on drainage system development is also nearing completion and is expected to reduce the impact of mosquitoes. However, the fact that residents continue to struggle with shopping, studying, cooking, or simply being anywhere without being bitten by mosquitoes underscores the inadequacy of these measures.

The situation is no better in other major cities, as people grapple with mosquito-borne diseases. According to the Directorate General of Health Services' (DGHS) dengue dashboard, hospitals across the country have reported 1,741 cases since the beginning of the year, with 45 cases recorded in the past week alone. Given the potent combination of already high temperatures, intermittent rains, and vacated homes during Eid holiday, entomologists are right to fear a surge in numbers. They also recommend proactive measures such as using insect growth regulators and environmentally friendly microbial insecticides to curb mosquito breeding. But will the authorities act accordingly?

On Saturday, the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) launched a special three-day campaign across 536 educational institutions under its jurisdiction. Under the campaign, potential sources of stagnant water will be removed or destroyed, larviciding and adulticiding activities will be carried out on school premises and in surrounding areas, and students will be educated on dengue prevention. While this is a commendable initiative on paper, we hope it will not be a one-off event and that the measures introduced during this campaign will continue not only in schools under the DNCC but also be expanded nationwide, especially in more vulnerable areas.

The authorities must remember the lessons from 2025, which not only saw the second-highest number of dengue cases in 25 years but was also the third-deadliest year, with 413 deaths recorded. This year, under a new government that vows to set itself apart, we hope to see proactive steps to curb the spread of mosquito-borne diseases. The authorities must tackle this issue with the seriousness it deserves and ensure that the recommendations of experts are properly incorporated into their action plans.

Chattogram port can no longer delay green transition



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AHAMEDUL KARIM CHOWDHURY

The growing influence of weather and climate science on economic infrastructure deserves closer attention. Ports sit at the frontline of this relationship. Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events increasingly shape how ports operate, plan investments, and manage risks. Climate and environmental data are becoming central to how ports compete and remain resilient in the global maritime economy.

For Bangladesh, as it prepares to graduate from Least Developed Country (LDC) status, protective cushions such as preferential market access, concessional financing, and regulatory flexibility will gradually diminish. In their place will emerge a more demanding global trade environment where environmental performance, carbon accountability, and sustainability credentials increasingly influence access to markets, finance, and investment. In this changing landscape, an important question arises: is the Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) institutionally prepared for this future?

During my 28 years of professional experience at Chattogram Port Authority (CPA), I have never seen a dedicated environmental protection department, a sustainability cell, or even a designated environmental professional responsible for long-term environmental planning and compliance in the CPA. This absence is no longer a minor administrative gap. It is becoming a strategic vulnerability at a port that handles more than 80 percent of Bangladesh's seaborne trade and remains the country's primary maritime gateway.

Ports are far from environmentally neutral spaces. They concentrate emissions, noise, wastewater discharge, oil pollution, and solid waste. Ships burn fuel at berth, trucks queue for hours around the port city, and cargo-handling equipment operates around the clock. Despite this reality, environmental impacts at Chattogram Port remain largely unmeasured and unmanaged in any systematic way.

Globally, port authorities have learned a simple truth: what is not measured cannot be managed. Modern ports routinely conduct emissions inventories, monitor air and water quality, measure carbon output, and conduct environmental audits. Many now deploy digital systems to monitor air pollution, water quality, and noise levels in real time across port areas. At Chattogram Port, however, such practices remain limited

and fragmented. Environmental management is still treated largely as an external compliance obligation rather than a core governance responsibility.

However, after LDC graduation, Bangladesh will face increasing scrutiny from trading partners, international lenders, insurers, shipping lines, and global supply chains. Environmental compliance will increasingly become a condition of doing business rather than simply a donor requirement. Ports will be assessed not only on efficiency and

fragmented and reactive.

Shipping itself is undergoing a major transformation, and ports are central to that shift. Around the world, port authorities promote greener shipping through incentive schemes such as reduced port charges for low-emission vessels, priority berthing for environmentally compliant ships, and penalties for heavy polluters. These measures influence shipping behaviour far more effectively than policy statements. However, for such frameworks to work, they must be supported by reliable environmental data.

Deploying monitoring systems for air emissions, water quality, and noise levels across berths and terminals would allow CPA to move from perception-based compliance to measurable environmental performance. Continuous data could help the CPA provide tariff incentives and priority berthing, linking reduced

practical commitment to sustainability. International experience shows that renewable energy initiatives often work best through public-private partnership (PPP) models, allowing ports to benefit from private investment and expertise while focusing on core operations.

Some argue that the shift toward a landlord port model or donor-funded infrastructure projects will automatically address environmental concerns. This assumption is misleading. Global terminal operators are accountable for individual terminals, not cumulative port-wide impacts such as air pollution, emissions, traffic congestion, or the broader city-port interface. Donor safeguard mechanisms are also project-specific and temporary. They cannot replace permanent institutional capacity. Environmental sustainability, therefore, must be institutionally embedded. This is not



'Ports are far from environmentally neutral spaces as they concentrate emissions, noise, wastewater discharge, oil pollution, and solid waste.'

VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

capacity but also on carbon intensity, pollution control, energy efficiency, and climate resilience. Green shipping corridors, emission disclosure rules, and environmental performance-linked port charges are gradually becoming global norms. If Chattogram Port fails to adapt, it risks losing competitiveness, investment opportunities, and credibility in the evolving maritime economy.

Therefore, environmental sustainability cannot remain an "additional duty" scattered across departments within the CPA. It urgently needs a formal environmental protection and sustainability cell reporting directly to senior management. Such a unit should oversee environmental planning, emissions monitoring, regulatory compliance, audits, and coordination with regulators, development partners, and research institutions. Otherwise, without clear institutional ownership, sustainability initiatives will remain

charges to verified environmental performance rather than self-declared vessel characteristics. CPA already has the authority to design such schemes. What it currently lacks is emissions data, performance benchmarks, and in-house environmental expertise.

Another important intervention is shore power supply, allowing ships to switch off auxiliary engines while at berth and connect to onshore electricity. This can significantly reduce air pollution and carbon emissions in port cities. For a densely populated city like Chattogram, the public health benefits alone justify serious attention. Yet, shore power remains largely absent from CPA's long-term planning.

There is also a major opportunity in renewable energy. CPA operates container freight stations, warehouses, sheds, and administrative buildings—many with large rooftop surfaces suitable for solar panels. Solar power could reduce long-term energy costs, cut emissions, and demonstrate a

an argument against port expansion but for responsible and future-ready development. That is why the Ministry of Shipping, CPA leadership, policymakers, port users, and development partners must recognise that environmental sustainability now sits at the heart of port governance, trade competitiveness, and public health.

Climate science is no longer only about forecasting storms. It also helps critical infrastructure prepare for an uncertain future. The coming decade will determine whether Chattogram Port evolves into a credible gateway in a carbon-constrained global economy—or struggles to keep pace with a rapidly transforming maritime industry. For Bangladesh, the message is clear: environmental intelligence and climate awareness must now guide port governance. Choosing leadership in environmental sustainability today will cost far less than correcting institutional neglect tomorrow.

Can digitising justice break the cycle of impunity?



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BENZIR AHAMMED SHAWON

While the seats of power have shifted since the election in February, a much older, darker reality persists for the women and children of Bangladesh. A systemic epidemic of gender-based violence persists in the country, where the very institutions meant to provide justice often act as the primary barrier to it. This isn't just about a few corrupt officers; it is about an entire structure that protects anyone with enough money or political muscle.

To understand the depth of this rot, we need only look back on the visceral horrors that have transpired in recent weeks. On February 24, a six-year-old girl was taken to an under-construction building in Dhaka's Hatirjheel area and was reportedly raped before being murdered. While her family and neighbours protested outside the police station, a familiar fear began to spread: the rumour that influential local figures were already pulling strings to bury the investigation.

On March 1, an eight-year-old girl was found by road workers inside

Sitakunda Eco Park in Chattogram. The perpetrator had slit her throat, severing her windpipe in a literal attempt to silence her. Despite receiving treatment, the child eventually succumbed to her injuries. The perpetrator (a neighbour of the girl's family) was identified, arrested, and jailed, with police confirming the victim has been subjected to attempted rape. Meanwhile, in Narsingdi, a 15-year-old was abducted and murdered in retaliation of her family demanding justice for a previous assault by the same perpetrators. The fact that a former Union Parishad member was among those arrested in connection with the crime shows how political power is often a tool for violence.

In these cases, even when the courts eventually move, they move too slowly. In March 2025, an eight-year-old in Magura died after being raped by her sister's in-laws. The attention this case received in public discourse can be credited for the relatively speedy trial that followed. Unfortunately, for every case that receives justice quickly,

hundreds of cases are quietly discarded because the families were too scared or too poor to fight the system.

The core of the problem is a massive vacuum in our laws. Without a dedicated witness protection law, victims and witnesses are left completely exposed. In rural areas, this allows the *shalish* (village councils) to take over. These councils often resort to "settling" rape cases by forcing the survivor to marry her rapist. This is essentially the state allowing for lifelong domestic torture to take place. This cycle is reinforced by the fact that marital rape is still not a crime in Bangladesh. When the Women's Affairs Reform Commission made recommendations to change this in 2025, rallies were held against the proposed changes, led by right-wing groups, who called the reforms "anti-Islamic." Ultimately, these vital protections were left to languish in legislative limbo.

To break this cycle, we must fix our broken bureaucracy. A key part of the solution can be a publicly accessible justice dashboard—a digital registry allowing any victim or witness to securely log incidents. The first step is anonymous geographic mapping. If a map shows a sudden cluster of child abductions in a specific union, for example, it would become impossible to claim an incident as being isolated. To make sure no one can delete a file or change a statement, the system should

use immutable, blockchain-style digital logging. Every medical report and police action would be timestamped and visible to everyone. If a local officer "loses" a forensics report, the whole country would be able to see who was responsible for the delay.

Finally, we need a fundamental change in how we prosecute these crimes through an evidence-based, irrevocable prosecution process. Perpetrators often intimidate a victim's family into withdrawing their case. They may kidnap relatives or burn down crops until the victim says, "I don't want to testify." In a digitised system, once a case is validated, the state must assume the full burden of prosecution. If a rapist knows that killing or bribing the victim won't stop the trial, because the state is moving forward regardless, the incentive to intimidate largely disappears. The target is moved from the back of a traumatised child and onto the shoulders of the state.

What is the true measure of a nation's progress? It is the safety of its women and children as well as other vulnerable communities. To ensure this, we cannot keep asking survivors to be heroes and fight the system alone. Given the present state of things, digitising all relevant aspects of the justice system can be a powerful tool in ensuring that violence against the powerless leads to real, unavoidable accountability.

Unmasking the systemic crisis behind our deadly roads



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MAHTAB UDDIN

Bangladesh stands at a crossroads where our economic progress is being held back by profound structural failures, and nowhere is this more starkly visible than in the transport sector. When a bus loses control and plunges into the depths of the Padma River while waiting to board a ferry, as it happened recently, it is not just an accident; it stands as a harrowing symbol of our fragile transport system that frequently allows for such tragedies. According to the Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, the death toll from road accidents in 2025 was 9,111, averaging 25 lives lost every day. But such annual or monthly figures are often a fraction of the reality, as they mostly account only for those who die on the spot. For example, according to the WHO, the actual death toll in 2021 was 31,578, whereas local estimates cited only 7,809.

In public health, the severity of a crisis is measured by the case fatality rate. For Covid-19, this rate was 1.45 percent; for dengue, it is 0.45 percent. But for road accidents, this rate has consistently hovered between 18 and 36 percent over the last decade. Another statistic underscores this horror: Bangladesh is among the countries with the highest fatalities per vehicle. It records 102 deaths per 10,000 vehicles, compared to just 13 in neighbouring India and seven in Sri Lanka. So, every time a vehicle hits the road here, it is significantly more dangerous than in most countries.

The reasons behind this relentless procession of deaths in Bangladesh are manifold. Among them, one factor that is seldom discussed is the role of fiscal policy. Import duties on new, safety-equipped vehicles range from 100 to 300 percent. This high tariff is not limited to private cars; it extends heavily

to public transport. The total tax incidence on passenger buses averages 36 to 59 percent, while for minibuses, it ranges from 89 to 127 percent. For large air-conditioned buses, the burden is even higher. These exorbitant rates do not just prevent individuals from buying safer vehicles; they also stifle the import of modern public transport, effectively serving as a state "incentive" to keep aged, unfit vehicles on the road.

Safety is further compromised through steep duties on life-saving equipment. Tariffs on high-quality helmets range from 58 to 90 percent; airbags and sensors face tariffs of 59 to 107 percent; and brake pads or linings incur tariffs of 58 to 89 percent. On average, anyone seeking to repair a vehicle with new parts faces a tax burden of 58 to 107 percent. Consequently, most mechanics in Bangladesh resort to using substandard or second-hand parts, further escalating the risk of accidents. Our roads thus remain haunted by dilapidated vehicles with zero crash-test ratings; in other words, "mobile death traps" devoid of basic safety features, such as airbags or advanced braking systems.

The scarcity of public transport is another driver of this crisis. Bangladesh has one of the lowest rates of motorisation globally, a shortage that forces the repeated repair of old vehicles and encourages chronic overloading. A big part of the problem here is the corruption festering within the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA). It is an open secret that vehicle fitness certificates are often provided without inspection, while "contract" licences are handed to unskilled drivers for a price.

A 2025 survey revealed that 63.29 percent of

BRTA service recipients had to pay bribes. This is compounded by powerful syndicates and "token systems," where unfit vehicles ply the roads under the very nose of the administration in exchange for fixed extortion. Currently, over 600,000 vehicles are unfit or without updated fitness certificates, and many drivers are either unskilled or unlicensed. According to Transparency International Bangladesh, annual corruption and extortion in the road

rarely permanently fixed. As a result, tragedies keep recurring in the same locations, year after year. Furthermore, pedestrian safety is virtually non-existent. While overpasses exist in considerable numbers, pedestrians rarely use them. Unlike in many other countries, Bangladesh also does not have enough signalled zebra crossings. Pedestrians now account for nearly one-third of all road fatalities.

passengers remain perpetually at risk.

Finally, our grasp of post-accident management—the "golden hour"—is negligible. The persistent lack of skilled paramedics and modern trauma centres on our highways means that many who survive the initial impact die en route to the hospital. The uncontrolled surge of motorcycles and reckless speeding by young riders has further worsened the crisis. The lack of medians and faulty road signs also continues to confuse drivers, with fog or rain often leading to disastrous consequences.

To cure these system-wide issues, we must adopt the following strategic measures immediately.

First, fiscal reform is essential: high import duties on safe, modern vehicles should be reduced to the extent possible, and taxes on public transport and essential spare parts (helmets, brake pads, etc.) eliminated. Second, the BRTA must be reformed: it must be fully depoliticised, and the licensing and fitness processes digitised to ensure complete transparency. Corruption must be met with swift, proper punishment. Third, the emergency response system should be strengthened by establishing modern trauma centres and paramedic units at regular intervals along highways. Fourth, traffic laws must be strictly enforced, with driving hours properly regulated and regular drug tests mandated.

Fifth, all "black spots" must be permanently fixed; ferry and launch boarding platforms and pontoons must be modernised; and regular zebra crossings, traffic signals, and automated railway gates must be ensured. Sixth, there must be zero tolerance for extortion: the "token system" and syndicates must be abolished, and sufficient traffic cameras installed for automated enforcement. Finally, the government should establish a high-powered commission for the transport sector to ensure direct accountability.

Undertaking all this will be a big challenge, of course, but it still must be done given the ever-increasing human toll. The new government must act decisively to deliver meaningful results.



Rescue efforts are underway following the plunge of a bus into the Padma River at the Daulatdia ferry terminal, March 26, 2026.

PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS

transport sector amount to approximately Tk 1,060 crore. Moreover, most transport owners are directly involved in politics, contributing to political criminalisation of our roads and highways.

The quality of roads is also to blame. Some surveys suggest that 80 percent of Bangladesh's roads are "1-star" rated, largely due to rampant engineering flaws and the lack of pedestrian access. While "black spots" or accident-prone areas are identified, they are

Added to this are the inhumane working hours of drivers. Long-haul drivers operate for days without adequate sleep, often handing the steering wheel to unskilled assistants. Unlike in many countries, where driving hours are strictly regulated and violations carry severe penalties for both the owner and the driver, our system remains largely lawless. Furthermore, nearly 22 percent of drivers reportedly use narcotics while on duty. Without professional training or mandatory drug testing, the lives of

Our LDC graduation strategy needs revision, regardless of deferral outcome

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BADRUL HASSAN, ZAHID HASSAN and KHANDAKER LUTFUL KHALED

Bangladesh's graduation from a Least Developed Country (LDC) status is no longer a distant milestone; it is an immediate test of readiness and economic resilience. With graduation set for November 2026 and a possible extension under consideration, the real issue is not timing, but preparedness.

The country first met all graduation criteria in 2018 and in June 2021, the recommendation for graduation from LDC was endorsed with a five-year preparatory period. In early 2025, the Smooth Transition Strategy (STS) to ensure a sustainable graduation was released, providing a sound framework. It is organised around five strategic pillars: ensuring macroeconomic stability; exploring and securing trade preferences and favourable transition measures; promoting export diversification and competitiveness; building productive capacity (including technological upgrading and innovation); and building partnerships and international cooperation. Although it is structurally sound, the context it was prepared in has shifted.

While the UN's enhanced monitoring

process allows for crisis-based review, including deferment, the uncertainty surrounding it carries real costs: delayed compliance, postponed investment, and weakened policy momentum. Bangladesh must be "graduation-ready" regardless of the outcome of this process. The urgency is reinforced by economic realities. Exports fell by nearly five percent to \$47.74 billion in 2025 compared to 2024, and RMG, accounting for 84 percent of exports, took a hit due to weak global demand. Meanwhile, the World Bank and several think tanks estimate that poverty has risen above 20 percent since the last Household Income and Expenditure Survey in 2022. GDP growth has slowed to 3.49 percent in the fiscal year 2024–25, and inflation remains elevated, leaving little room for poorly sequenced transition measures.

In this context, what the STS requires is execution clarity. A strategy becomes credible when it makes tough choices, assigns owners and relevant actors for the specific deliverables, clarifies financing, and includes contingency planning for shocks. The update should therefore focus less on adding more "actions" and more on making the existing actions implementable and measurable so that the STS remains credible whether graduation occurs in 2026 or later.

The preparation timeline itself explains the gap. The STS was drafted in a global environment shaped by expectations of post-pandemic recovery and economic stabilisation. Those assumptions no longer hold. The global economic environment has shifted dramatically. Ongoing wars in Eastern Europe and the Middle East have triggered severe energy market volatility. These shocks directly affect the economic

resilience required for a smooth graduation process. Besides, domestic macroeconomic pressures have also intensified. Bangladesh is confronting liquidity constraints, slowing revenue growth, and persistent inflation. At the same time, the country continues to bear major fiscal and humanitarian responsibilities, including hosting over a million displaced Rohingya refugees.

Moreover, trade and investment are increasingly shaped by sustainability, labour, and governance standards. Without aligning the STS with Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) priorities, such as green finance, renewable energy, social inclusion, and governance reforms, Bangladesh risks losing competitiveness in sustainability-linked trade regimes. The policy landscape has also changed following the 2024 political transition, with a new government pursuing stabilisation and structural reforms. The committees formed under the STS in early 2025 also need to be revisited due to massive changes in the political leadership and bureaucracy. This will help address any knowledge gap and hidden pitfalls. Therefore, it is both logical and necessary to reassess whether the existing graduation roadmap aligns with current economic priorities and policy commitments. The following can help recalibrate the STS.

First, a "decision calendar" and scenario annex should be added to the STS. It should list time-critical decisions for 2026–27, such as market access pathways, rules-of-origin and compliance readiness, Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)/Intellectual Property (IP) preparedness steps, and reform of incentives with deadlines and named owners. If deferment is granted, the

STS should also include a 2027–29 calendar, but the 2026 calendar should remain as a baseline to avoid complacency.

Second, a focused preference transition package centred on RMG but linked to diversification should be introduced. The STS should include a market-by-market map showing which preferences change when; a compliance and rules-of-origin readiness plan (at both factory-level and border-level); and a realistic trade-negotiation sequencing plan. This package should be paired with a "diversification shortlist" (a small set of non-RMG product clusters and service exports) and a trade-cost reduction checklist (ports, customs, standards).

Third, the STS should have a TRIPS/IP and pharmaceuticals readiness annex. World Trade Organization (WTO) decisions give LDCs a general TRIPS transition until July 1, 2034 (for pharmaceuticals, the deadline is January 1, 2033), or until a member ceases to be an LDC, whichever is earlier. Since these flexibilities are linked to LDC status, the STS should include a concrete post-graduation preparedness checklist.

Fourth, the financing pillar must be strengthened to ensure a clear transition financing strategy. The amended STS should outline how Bangladesh will fund competitiveness and resilience investments despite tight fiscal space. This includes near-term domestic revenue measures, smarter spending that protects social protection and productivity, and a pipeline of bankable projects to attract blended and climate finance.

Fifth, the government should deepen engagement with the UN, technical agencies, and development partners to secure targeted

capacity-building support. A core group of professionals from key sectors should be trained to manage the transition, while trade bodies and the private sector develop preparedness plans and strengthen capacity in negotiation, market positioning, and collective bargaining.

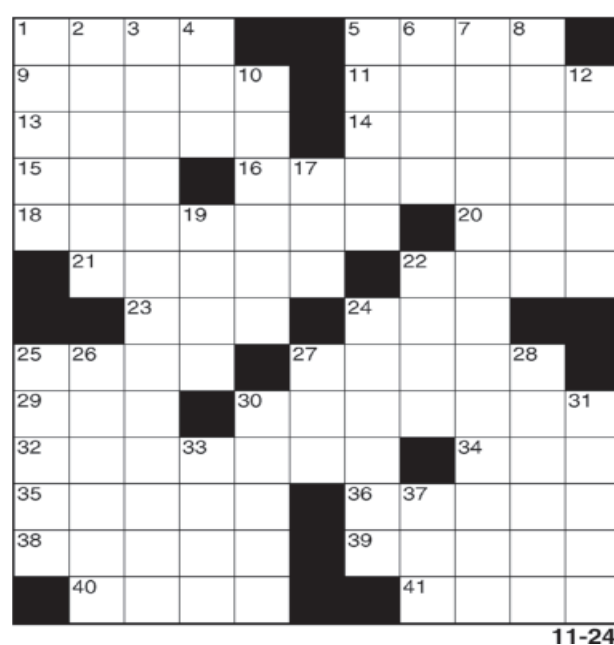
Sixth, shock-responsive social protection and stress testing must be embedded in the STS. Graduation will not be sustainable if adjustment costs fall on vulnerable groups. Therefore, those most exposed to graduation risk should be identified by sector, region, and gender and responses should be predefined, including temporary support, active labour market programmes, and targeted safety nets.

Seventh, the STS should mainstream green finance, renewable energy, labour standards, gender equity, and disability inclusion, while strengthening independent monitoring and accountability. Positioning export sectors as ESG-compliant will be essential to access premium markets and meet evolving trade requirements. Clear mechanisms should track macroeconomic performance, ESG indicators, and the business climate, supported by annual public reporting to build confidence and sustain reform momentum.

Revisiting the Smooth Transition Strategy now through clear timelines, preference transition, TRIPS and pharmaceutical preparedness, transition financing, and shock-responsive social protection would strengthen Bangladesh's position. By embedding ESG principles, improving the ease of doing business, and sequencing reforms with accountability, the STS can become a credible roadmap for a more sustainable and competitive economy, whether graduation occurs in 2026 or later.

CROSSWORD
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
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5 Radiator sound
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16 Tennis champ's forte
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24 Tribe symbols
25 Lock
26 Pound parts
27 Table part
28 Morality topic
30 Attire
31 Goes under
33 Opposed
37 Fitting



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DINA ZAMAN

A humane contemporary artist

AISHWARYA RAIHAN

Dina Zaman is a US-based artist, who recently conducted a workshop with emerging Bangladeshi artists and the underprivileged and socially ostracized children of Shishupolli. The Daily Star got in touch with the Bangladeshi-American interdisciplinary artist for an exclusive interview.

Please tell us about your art and the inspiration behind your artistic practices.

My art is an organic, unpredictable flow shaped by my experiences as a daughter, wife, mother, and woman. I transform public spaces into narratives of resilience and Bangladeshi heritage—one mural and one sisterhood at a time. Trained at the University of Dhaka's Faculty of Fine Arts, my practice spans figurative painting, mixed media, and performance art. I merge traditional Bangladeshi techniques with contemporary concepts, often portraying women with muscular physiques to symbolize their internal strength. My public art is not merely decorative; it is declarative, asserting presence and history.

Share journey of becoming an artist.

I grew up in the buzzing, densely populated streets of Dhaka. Moving to the relatively "empty" landscape of



Indiana, USA, was a profound shift. For 20 years, the challenges of migration and adjustment silenced my creative pursuits. Eventually, my mind reached out to my



PHOTOS: COURTESY



soul to "bring back what once was mine." When paintbrushes initially felt foreign, I dipped my fingers directly into the pigment, letting my imagination flow onto the canvas. Since then, I have exhibited internationally and served as a cultural bridge-builder, with my work featured on PBS/WOSU and in various global media outlets.

Could you tell us about one favorite work amongst your own?

My most recent work on body-shaming is particularly special. It resonates with many women, including myself, who have been judged for being "too skinny" or "too chubby." These critiques ignore the natural cycles of aging, childbirth, and hormonal shifts. Through this piece, I assert that a person's character remains constant regardless of their physical changes.

Could you tell us about your work in the US?

I have completed three large-scale public art projects funded by the City of Columbus, each blending Bangladeshi folk art with themes of womanhood.

These installations make South Asian heritage visible in American spaces while honouring collective memory.

In 2025, I joined the Board of Directors at Boardman Arts Park in Delaware, Ohio, where I have a permanent sculpture made from recycled tires. I also serve as a navigator, curator, and grant reviewer for the Greater Columbus Arts Council (GCAC). Additionally, I co-founded Lumina Arts Space to uplift marginalized women and Bangladeshi artists. My work also extends to art therapy, where I help refugees and survivors of trauma in Columbus find healing through self-expression.

Please share your recent and upcoming artistic ventures.

Recently, my work was exhibited at the Rome International Art Fair at Medina Gallery and the Tobian Art Gallery in Florence. In Bangladesh, my paintings were showcased at Bhumi Gallery and Edge Gallery.

Currently, I am holding a solo exhibition at the FCV Art Gallery in Upper Arlington, Ohio. My next major solo exhibition is scheduled for September 2026 at the Priscilla R Tyson Cultural Arts Center in Ohio.

'Bonolota Express' releases in Australia

Since Eid day, **Bonolota Express** has been captivating audiences in cinemas across the country. The film continues to run houseful in almost every show at multiplexes, and has now been released in Australia as well.



The film is directed by Tanim Noor. It has now been released in Australia from March 27 through BongOz Films. The film is showing in 19 theatres across cities like Bankstown, Campbelltown, and Carousel. It will also release in the UK in April.

The ensemble cast includes Mosharraf Karim, Chanchal Chowdhury, Sariful Razz, Sabila Nur, Shamol Mawla, Azmeri Haque Badhan, Zakia Bari Mamo, among others.

'Rockstar' Shakib Khan goes viral with new look



Megastar Shakib Khan is once again wowing audiences with a bold new look on the big screen. As a special treat for his fans, the actor unveiled the first look of himself in **Rockstar**, directed by Azman Rusho.

The poster presents him in a gritty street-rocker avatar, featuring a sleeveless vest, long beaded necklace, tied-back dreadlocks, tattoos, and bold styling—marking a clear shift from his traditional hero persona.

Sun Motion Picture Ltd is producing the film, with Azman Rusho also handling the story and direction. The screenplay has been penned by Nusrat Maati, while dialogues are written by Ayman Asib Shadhin and Samiul B Huiyan.

'Harry Potter' trailer becomes HBO's most-watched with 277 million views



The first trailer for **Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone**, a new television adaptation of Harry Potter, has broken records. The trailer crossed 277 million organic views within 48 hours of its release on March 26, making it the most-watched trailer in the history of HBO and HBO Max.

The series is based on the first novel by JK Rowling. Each season is expected to follow one book from the seven-part series. The first season

will adapt **Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone**.

The cast includes John Lithgow as Albus Dumbledore and Janet McTeer as Minerva McGonagall. Paapa Essiedu plays Severus Snape. Other cast members include Rory Wilmot as Neville Longbottom and Lox Pratt as Draco Malfoy.

It is set to premiere during Christmas 2026 on HBO and HBO Max.

NEWS

MPs rebuke transport boss for loose talk

FROM PAGE 12
a large number of people dead, which is very unexpected, they said, while urging the concerned ministry to be more active.

At least 274 people were killed and over 1,500 injured across the country during the 10-day Eid-ul-Fitr travel period, according to the Road Safety Foundation.

Instructions were also given to place progress reports before the prime minister today on three key ministries: the power, energy and mineral resources ministry; road transport and bridges ministry and the foreign ministry.

The move is aimed at allowing the government to closely monitor the performance of ministries that are now facing public attention and policy pressure.

The meeting also decided that ministers and lawmakers should take advance preparation for the upcoming parliamentary session, where the opposition may raise questions or criticism over the work of these three ministries.

Preparations would include reviewing recent steps taken by the ministries, identifying weak points and preparing clear responses so that the government can explain its position in parliament in a more organised way.

At the meeting, 45 lawmakers were selected to take part in discussions on these matters in parliament.

The government wants to ensure that ministers are better prepared, facts are presented clearly and debate on key issues remains constructive during the next session.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman

also announced that cabinet members will brief the members of parliament about their activities.

Monthly briefings will be arranged for MPs to discuss government performance and plans so they can speak in the parliament and take measures in their constituencies.

Tarique also directed the authorities to take stern action against those responsible for creating an artificial fuel crisis and to prevent fuel smuggling.

The leader of the House also urged the members of the parliament to remain vigilant and work closely with local administrations to ensure that fuel prices do not surge and people do not suffer from sudden price hikes.

"There is a risk of smuggling taking place," Chief Whip Nurul Islam Moni told reporters after the meeting.

To stop smuggling, he instructed the home minister to take strict measures, after which tougher actions will follow. At the same time, raids will be carried out against those engaged in hoarding, stockpiling fuel or attempting to create an artificial fuel crisis, he quoted the PM as saying.

Due to the ongoing war in the Middle East, the global economy is unstable and fuel prices have risen worldwide. Yet in Bangladesh, the government is making every effort to keep prices steady, even providing subsidies of nearly Tk 200 crore per month, Moni said.

Tarique informed the MPs of this situation, urging them to remain vigilant so that people do not suffer from sudden price hikes. He directed the MPs to coordinate with district commissioners and local

administrations to ensure necessary measures are taken without disruption.

He also mentioned that the energy minister will brief the parliament following Section 300 of Rules of Procedure of the parliament.

Moni said that it was clarified that fuel supply is sufficient: a ship carrying 200,000 tonnes of fuel has already docked and another of equal capacity is loaded and on its way.

"Thus, there is no shortage of supply; the crisis is being artificially created by certain media outlets, opportunists and smugglers. Decisions were taken today to prevent this."

Although fuel prices have risen in neighbouring countries and many parts of the world, keeping the prices stable in Bangladesh can be considered a success of the government. This was achieved through prior planning, said Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed.

"To ensure that farmers do not face difficulties during the Boro season, the government is supplying fuel with subsidies. The issue of fuel smuggling has come to the government's attention and strict measures will be taken to stop it," he told reporters.

The meeting, which was adjourned and will resume tomorrow at 1:30pm, also expressed deep shock and grief at the death of Dilara Hafiz, wife of Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad Hafiz Uddin Ahmed.

'Cuba is next'

FROM PAGE 12
military, I said, "You'll never have to use it," but sometimes you have to use it," Trump said.

"And Cuba is next, by the way. But pretend I didn't say that."

Trump did not specify what he planned to do with Cuba, telling the media to "disregard that statement" before repeating "Cuba's next" to laughter from the audience.

In his Friday speech, the Republican president also made a teasing comment dubbing the Strait of Hormuz the "Strait of Trump."

Cuba's leader Miguel Diaz Canel said last week that any external aggressor would face "unbreakable resistance," even as the country was hit with two nationwide blackouts in a week.

CID brings back \$3.62m sent abroad

FROM PAGE 1
"We have already submitted the required documents. Hopefully, the money will be credited to the CID account on Sunday morning," the official added.

CID officials described the recovery as a major milestone in tackling cross-border financial crime, marking the country's first successful repatriation of funds held overseas after such a scam.

MTFE, short for Metaverse Foreign Exchange, is a platform that expanded rapidly in Bangladesh using a multi-level marketing (MLM) model that lured investors with promises of high returns from cryptocurrency and forex trading, according to CID.

The platform began operating in Bangladesh around June 2022 and grew quickly in early 2023. Users were given virtual trading accounts where deposits appeared as digital dollars.

Investigators later found the system had been manipulated to fabricate profits and losses, creating an illusion of legitimate trading activity. Payouts were made early to build trust among investors.

By mid-2023, however, withdrawals were abruptly blocked and the platform vanished.

According to CID estimates and media reports, around Tk 11,000 crore was siphoned off — mostly from Bangladeshi investors. Thousands

of people across Dhaka, Barishal, Rajshahi, Cumilla, Naogaon, Kushtia, Brahmanbaria and Satkhira are believed to have been affected.

One such victim, Maruf Rahaman Mahim, filed a case with Khilgaon Police Station on August 28, 2023, under the Digital Security Act, accusing MTFE's founding chairman, Mohammad Masud Alam, MTFE agent Mobashirul Ebad, and 50-60 unnamed individuals. The case was later transferred to CID.

During the probe, investigators found the virtual currency shown in users' accounts was entirely fictitious. Funds were funnelled into MTFE-linked wallets before being transferred to central accounts and dispersed across multiple cryptocurrency wallets, including those on the exchange OKX.

CID later learned that Sri Lankan authorities had recovered MTFE-linked funds from the same platform. Acting on this lead, it contacted the exchange, which requested formal documentation.

With support from the US Embassy in Dhaka, the US Secret Service, the FBI, and the US Department of Justice's ICITAP programme, investigators traced and seized cryptocurrency assets worth around Tk 45 crore from MTFE-linked wallets.

To facilitate repatriation, CID

signed an agreement with Asset Reality Limited in November last year. Under the deal, the firm was tasked with receiving the seized crypto assets, liquidating them, and transferring the proceeds to Bangladesh, charging a 2.5 percent service fee.

A dedicated account at Sonali Bank's Malibagh branch was opened to receive the funds, with three CID officials as signatories.

"The seized cryptocurrency in an OKX wallet was first transferred to Asset Reality, which then converted it into US dollars and remitted the funds to us," a senior CID official told The Daily Star.

According to CID sources, the recovered money will be distributed among victims through a court-supervised process after verification of claims and supporting documents.

Individuals will not be able to claim funds directly. Officials said the judicial route was chosen to ensure transparency and accountability.

"The victims will be listed, and Bangladesh Bank along with the court will decide how the money will be distributed," said Mohammad Bashir Uddin.

CID chief Mosleh Uddin Ahmed could not be reached for comment despite repeated attempts over the phone.

Dhaka seeks EU help

FROM PAGE 12
assess Bangladesh's request to defer its LDC graduation, currently slated for later this year, to 2029. If not resolved through discussion, the plea will be put to a vote at the UN General Assembly.

The minister also urged the EU trade commissioner to begin negotiations on a free trade agreement, following a proposal Bangladesh submitted to the EU several months ago.

According to Mukhtar, the EU commissioner raised questions about labour conditions, to which the minister replied that Bangladesh had already amended its labour law in line with International Labour Organisation

recommendations.

The minister further called for expanding bilateral trade between Bangladesh and the 27-nation EU bloc. Currently, Bangladesh exports goods worth over \$25 billion annually to the EU, predominantly garments, while importing around \$6 billion worth of goods in return.

Bangladesh is seeking the deferment amid concerns from the business community that it is unprepared to face the challenges of graduation. Immediate graduation could trigger significant export losses due to the withdrawal of preferential trade benefits.

21 Bangladeshis survive

FROM PAGE 12
coastguard said the boat had left Tobruk, a port city in eastern Libya, on March 21, bound for Greece, the gateway for many migrants hoping for asylum in the European Union.

"During the journey, the passengers lost their bearings and remained at sea for six days without food or water," the coastguard stated.

The Greek authorities have arrested two South Sudanese men, aged 19 and 22, believed to be the smugglers. They are now under investigation for "illegal entry into the country" and "negligent homicide".

The vessel carrying the group was 53 nautical miles south of Ierapetra, a town on southern Crete.

That, coupled with a shortage of food and water, had "led to the deaths," the spokesman said.

The number of migrants who have died trying to reach EU soil more than doubled in the first two months of 2026, compared with last year, the EU border agency Frontex said earlier this month.

According to data from the International Organization for Migration, 559 people died in the Mediterranean during January and February, compared with 287 for the same period last year.

In a bid to stem the crossings, the European Parliament on Thursday endorsed a major tightening of EU migration policy and approved the concept of "return hubs", designed to send migrants to non-EU third countries.

The proposals have been criticised by rights groups as inhumane.

Nepal ensues

FROM PAGE 12
His popularity did not last, and he was beaten by Shah in his home constituency in an election this month, his second defeat since the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990. Anger over the deaths in September's protests helped Shah's Rastriya Swatantra Party win the election by a landslide.

The panel investigating last September's violence held Oli and Lekhak responsible for not taking any action to stop hours of firing on the protesters by police.

Police spokesperson Om Adhikari said Oli and Lekhak would be brought to court today.

Oli, 74, who has had two kidney transplants, has been transferred to a hospital from the police office where he was first taken, witnesses said.



A battery-run rickshaw plies the Khilgaon flyover in Dhaka, defying rules that prohibit such vehicles from using it. Such reckless practices could lead to an accident at any time. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Stand by people, help uphold law

FROM PAGE 3

Referring to the disruption, Tarique said, "Things that cause suffering and inconvenience for people cannot be allowed."

"Now the number one task is to clear this road."

He warned that such disorder would make it difficult for him to visit the office.

"The road must remain normal so that I can come to the office. If I have your support, I will be able to come. If I do not, I will not be able to," he said.

"Do you want me to come to the office?" he questioned.

When the crowd responded positively, the BNP chief said, "Then you must cooperate and keep the environment normal."

"I will come again here. If I find things normal, I will come more often. But this kind of road blockade cannot be allowed."

"If the road is blocked like this, it will not be possible for me to come. Visiting the office allows me to meet leaders and activists and

carry out organisational work..."

He stressed that people's movement must not be obstructed and asked supporters to clear the road within half an hour.

"If you act like this, people in the area will suffer. Thousands will suffer. We do not want to cause people's suffering. Isn't that right?" said the prime minister.

Later, Tarique held a meeting with ministers and lawmakers.

At the meeting, 45 MPs were selected to take part in constructive discussions and speak in parliament, and senior party leaders advised them accordingly.

BNP lawmakers were also asked to be prepared to make constructive statements in parliament on issues raised by the opposition.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and several cabinet members were present.

Meanwhile, after news spread of Tarique's visit, leaders and activists of the ruling BNP and its associate

bodies began gathering in Naya Paltan and nearby areas from the afternoon.

They occupied stretches from the Nightingale intersection to the Fakiropool intersection, blocking traffic on one side of the road.

Law enforcers were deployed in and around Naya Paltan, along with members of agencies responsible for the prime minister's security.

Prime Minister's Additional Press Secretary Atikur Rahman Ruman said Tarique also worked in his chamber and discussed organisational activities with leaders of the party and its associate bodies.

Tarique returned to the country on December 25 last year after nearly two decades abroad and last visited the party's central office on December 29.

After the BNP won the 13th national parliamentary election on February 12, he assumed office as prime minister on February 17.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, কক্সবাজার (রাজস্ব শাখা)

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স্মারক নং- ০৫.২০.২২০০.১২৮.২০.০৫৮.২০২৬-৩৫৯

তারিখ: ১১ চৈত্র ১৪৩২ বঙ্গাব্দ
২৫ মার্চ ২০২৬ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ

১৪৩৩ বঙ্গাব্দে বালুমহাল ইজারার জন্য উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র আহ্বান বিজ্ঞপ্তি:

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, "বালুমহাল ও মাটি ব্যবস্থাপনা (সংশোধন) আইন, ২০২৩" এবং "বালুমহাল ও মাটি ব্যবস্থাপনা বিধিমালা, ২০২৫" মোতাবেক কক্সবাজার জেলার ইজারায়োগ্য বালুমহাল ০১ বৈশাখ ১৪৩৩ বঙ্গাব্দ হতে ৩০ চৈত্র ১৪৩৩ বঙ্গাব্দ পর্যন্ত ইজারা প্রদানের নিমিত্ত দরপত্র অংশগ্রহণের জন্য প্রথম বা দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণির বালুমহাল ইজারাদার হিসাবে তালিকাভুক্ত ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে মুখবন্ধ খামে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে। আগ্রহী তালিকাভুক্ত ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে দরপত্রের শর্তাবলী অনুসরণে নির্ধারিত বালুমহাল ইজারা সংক্রান্ত দরপত্র ফরমে নিম্নোক্ত তফসিল অনুযায়ী দরপত্র জমা দেয়ার জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

দরপত্রের তফসিল

পর্যায় (বার)	দরপত্র আবেদন ফরম বিক্রয় শুরু ও বিক্রয় শেষের তারিখ ও সময়	দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখ ও সময়	দরপত্র বাস্তব খোলার তারিখ ও সময়
১	২	৩	৪
১ম পর্যায়	২৯.০৩.২০২৬ হতে ০১.০৪.২০২৬ তারিখ (প্রতিদিন সকাল ০৯.০০ টা হতে বিকাল ০৪.০০ পর্যন্ত)	০২.০৪.২০২৬ খ্রি. (সকাল ৯.০০ টা হতে দুপুর ২.০০ টা পর্যন্ত)	০২.০৪.২০২৬ খ্রি. (বিকাল ০৩.০০ ঘটিকা)
২য় পর্যায়	০৫.০৪.২০২৬ তারিখ হতে ০৬.০৪.২০২৬ (প্রতিদিন সকাল ০৯.০০ টা হতে বিকাল ০৪.০০ পর্যন্ত)	০৭.০৪.২০২৬ খ্রি. (সকাল ৯.০০ টা হতে দুপুর ২.০০ টা পর্যন্ত)	০৭.০৪.২০২৬ খ্রি. (বিকাল ০৩.০০ ঘটিকা)
৩য় পর্যায়	০৮.০৪.২০২৬ তারিখ হতে ০৯.০৪.২০২৬ (প্রতিদিন সকাল ০৯.০০ টা হতে বিকাল ০৪.০০ পর্যন্ত)	১২.০৪.২০২৬ খ্রি. (সকাল ৯.০০ টা হতে দুপুর ২.০০ টা পর্যন্ত)	১২.০৪.২০২৬ খ্রি. (বিকাল ০৩.০০ ঘটিকা)

কক্সবাজার জেলার ইজারায়োগ্য বালুমহালের তালিকা:

ক্র: নং	উপজেলার নাম	বালুমহালের নাম	মৌজা ও কিএস খতিয়ান নং	কিএস দাগ নং	জমির পরিমাণ (একর)	সরকারি মূল্য	সিউডিল মূল্য (প্রতিটি)
০১	০২	০৩	০৪	০৫	০৬	০৭	০৮
০১	রামু	চাকমারকুল বালুমহাল	চাকমারকুল খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	৮১৫৪	১.৬৮	৮,৬৩,৩৩৪/-	৫০০/-
০২		পানেরছড়া বালুমহাল	দক্ষিণ মিঠাছড়ি খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	৬৬৯৩, ৬৬৯২	২.২৫	১০,০৯,৮৩৮/-	১,০০০/-
০৩		বীকখালী নদী বালুমহাল	শ্রীকুল খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	৬১৩, ৬২৪, ৬২৫, ৬২৬, ৬৩৫, ৬৩৬, ৬৩৭, ৬৩৮, ৬৩৯, ৬৪০, ৬৪১, ৬৪২, ৬৪৩, ৬৪৪, ৬৪৫, ৬৪৬, ৬৪৭	৬.৯৫	৪২,৭৬,০৬৮/-	১,৫০০/-
০৪		টু-টেংগারছড়া (তাকের ছড়া) বালুমহাল	রাজারকুল খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	৮৮৭০, ৮৮৪০, ৮৭৯৯, ৮৯০৭	১.১১	৮,২৬,১০০/-	৫০০/-
০৫		চাইন্দাছড়া বালুমহাল	চাইন্দা খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	১৮৫৫, ১৮৫৬, ১৮৫৭, ১৮৫৮	০.৮১	২,০৯,১১৭/-	৫০০/-
০৬		উত্তর মিঠাছড়ি বালুমহাল	উত্তর মিঠাছড়ি খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	১৮৩১	১.৬৮	১,৬৮,৬৬৮/-	৫০০/-
০৭		পালিরছড়া বালুমহাল	চাইন্দা খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	৫২৩৬, ৭৫০১, ৫৭৩৩	১০.১৫	১১,৫৭,২৩৮/-	১,০০০/-
০৮		খেছুরাপালাং বালুমহাল	খেছুরাপালাং খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	২, ৭, ৩৬৭, ৪৮৭, ১০০১, ১২০২, ১২০১, ১২০৩, ২৭৭৯, ৩০৬২	১৭.০৩	৪,৫৬,৮৬১/-	৫০০/-
০৯		দারিয়ারদিঘী বালুমহাল	দারিয়ারদিঘী খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	২৬১১, ২৬৩৬, ২৬৩৮, ৩৬০৯, ৩৬৭৬	১০.৩৪	১৯,৫৯,১০০/-	১,৫০০/-
১০		খোয়াপালাং বালুমহাল	খোয়াপালাং খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	৪৪,৪৫,১০০৫,১০১৮, ১০৪২, ১২৪৮, ১৫২৮, ১৫২৯, ২৫৪৭, ২৬৩১, ২৬৭৭	১১.৩৫	২১,২৬,৮৭১/-	১,৫০০/-
১১		জাংছড়ি বালুমহাল	দক্ষিণ কচ্ছপিয়া, গর্জনীয়া, কচ্ছপিয়া খতিয়ান নং-১	৫৭৯৬, ৫৮১২, ৬১১১, ৬৬৫১, ৬৬৫২, ৬৬৬৭, ৫১৫৬, ৯৪৮৪, ৯৪৮৬, ৯৪৮৮, ৯৪৯৭	৭.২৯	৯,৫০,৪০০/-	৫০০/-
১২	চকরিয়া	হারবাং-১ বালুমহাল	হারবাং খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	১৬৫০৭, ১৬৭০৫, ১৬৭০২, ১৬৭০৩, ১৬৭০৬	১৬.৮৩	১০,০২,৬৫০/-	১,০০০/-
১৩		কোনখালী বালুমহাল	ডেওলা মানিকচর খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	২০০১/২৩০২	১.২৫	১৭,৬৫,৩১৮/-	১,০০০/-
১৪	পেকুয়া	সোনাইছড়ি বালুমহাল	সোনাইছড়ি খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	১২০৮, ১২৬৬, ১৭৮৬	২.৪৫	১৫,৪০,৭০৪/-	১,০০০/-
			টোটং খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	২৫৪৭	২.৭৩		
			টোটং খতিয়ান নম্বর-২১৬	২১৬, ২৫৪১, ২৬৩৩, ২৬৪২	৩.৫৪	১০,৭২	
১৫		বটতলী বালুমহাল	বটতলী খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	১০০১, ১১৭৭, ১১৭৯, ১১৯৮	০.১৮	১৪,৩৮,২৫০/-	১,০০০/-
১৬	দ্বন্দ্বীও	দ্বন্দ্বীও খাল বালুমহাল	দ্বন্দ্বীও খতিয়ান নম্বর-১	৭৫৯৯, ৭৬০০, ৭৬০১	১.০০	৬৯,৫৫,৬৬৮/-	২,৫০০/-

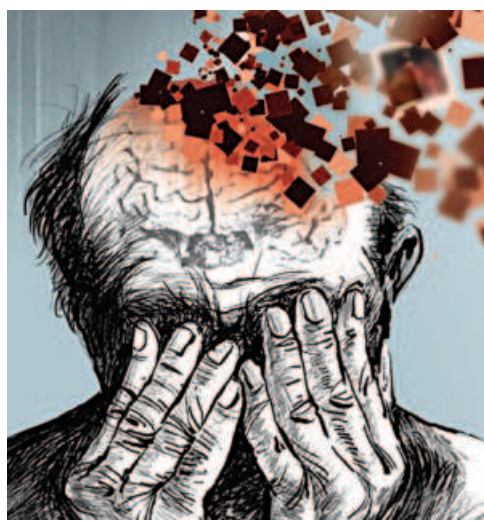
ক্যাডভারভুক্ত কোন বালুমহালের ইজারা দরপত্র যে পর্যায়ের অন্তর্ভুক্ত হবে সে বালুমহালটি পরবর্তী পর্যায়ের জন্য প্রযোজ্য হবে না।

দরপত্রের শর্তাবলী:

- দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে বর্ণিত তারিখ ও সময়ে বালুমহাল ইজারা দরপত্র ফরমের জন্য যে কোনো তফসিলি ব্যাংক হতে বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে উল্লিখিত সিউডিল মূল্য অনুযায়ী অফেরতযোগ্য ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার জেলা প্রশাসক, কক্সবাজার বরাবর জমা প্রদানপূর্বক কমিশনারের কার্যালয়, চট্টগ্রাম বিভাগ, চট্টগ্রাম; নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর কার্যালয়ের রাজস্ব শাখা; উপজেলা নির্বাহী অফিসারের কার্যালয়, কক্সবাজার সদর/রামু/চকরিয়া/পেকুয়া/দ্বন্দ্বীও হতে নির্ধারিত আবেদন ফরম সংগ্রহ করতে হবে।
- সীলমোহরকৃত মুখবন্ধ খামে প্রতিটি বালুমহালের জন্য পৃথক পৃথকভাবে দরপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে। খামের উপর বালুমহালের নাম সুস্পষ্টভাবে লিখতে হবে।

৩১. দরপত্র ফরমের নির্দিষ্ট স্থানে দরপত্র দাতার স্বাক্ষর থাকতে হবে। উদ্ধৃত দর অঙ্কে ও কথায় লিখতে হবে। দরপত্র ফরমে কোনো কাটা-ছেঁড়া বা ঘষামাজা করা যাবে না। হালনাগাদকৃত ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, হাল সন পর্যন্ত আয়কর, ভ্যাট প্রদানের সনদপত্র এবং সিউডিল ব্যাংক কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত আর্থিক সচ্ছলতা সনদ দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে।
৩২. দরপত্র ফরমের নির্দিষ্ট স্থানে দরপত্র দাতার স্বাক্ষর থাকতে হবে। উদ্ধৃত দর অঙ্কে ও কথায় লিখতে হবে। দরপত্র ফরমে কোনো কাটা-ছেঁড়া বা ঘষামাজা করা যাবে না। হালনাগাদকৃত ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, হাল সন পর্যন্ত আয়কর, ভ্যাট প্রদানের সনদপত্র এবং সিউডিল ব্যাংক কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত আর্থিক সচ্ছলতা সনদ দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে।
৩৩. বালুমহাল ইজারাদার হিসেবে তালিকাভুক্ত ও তালিকাভুক্তির সনদ নবায়ন ব্যতীত কোন ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠান বালুমহাল ইজারায় অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবে না। বালুমহাল ইজারাদার হিসাবে তালিকাভুক্ত ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট বিগত সময়ের বা পূর্বের কোন ইজারামূল্য বকেয়া থাকলে তার/তাদের দরপত্র বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে।
৩৪. বালুমহাল যেখানে যে অবস্থায় আছে, সে অবস্থায় ইজারা প্রদান করা হবে। ইজারা গ্রহীতাকে দরপত্র দাখিলের পূর্বেই সরেজমিন পরিদর্শন করে বালুমহালের বাস্তব অবস্থা সঠিকভাবে জেনে দরপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে।
৩৫. ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠান প্রদানের তিন কপি সত্যায়িত ছবি এবং সংশ্লিষ্ট ইউনিয়ন/পৌরসভার চেয়ারম্যান প্রদত্ত নাগরিকত্ব সনদের সত্যায়িত কপি দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে।
৩৬. পরিবহনের ব্যবস্থা দরপত্র উল্লেখ করতে হবে। দরপত্রের সাথে সংশ্লিষ্ট বালুমহালের স্কেচ ম্যাপ/মৌজা ম্যাপ সংশ্লিষ্ট উপজেলা ভূমি অফিস হতে সংগ্রহক্রমে দাখিল করতে হবে।
৩৭. জেলা বালুমহাল ব্যবস্থাপনা কমিটির সভায় অনুমোদন হওয়ার ৭ (সাত) কর্মদিবসের মধ্যে সমুদয় ইজারা মূল্য, ভ্যাট ও আয়করের টাকা সরকারের অনুকূলে জমা প্রদান করতে হবে। ইজারার অর্থ আংশিক বা কিস্তিতে পরিশোধ করা যাবে না। নির্ধারিত তারিখের মধ্যে সম্পূর্ণ ইজারাদেশ বাতিলসহ জামানতের অর্থ সরকার অনুকূলে বাজেয়াপ্ত হবে।
৩৮. ইজারা গ্রহীতাকে বালুমহালের ইজারা মূল্যের উপর অতিরিক্ত ২৫% ভ্যাট, ১০% আয়কর প্রদান করতে হবে। সরকার কর্তৃক সময় সময় জারিকৃত কর/পাওনা পরিশোধ করতে হবে। সর্বোচ্চ দরদাতার দর গৃহীত হওয়ার পর নীতিমালা মোতাবেক দরপত্র জেলা বালুমহাল ব্যবস্থাপনা কমিটি কর্তৃক চূড়ান্ত অনুমোদনের পর ০৭ (সাত) কর্মদিবসের মধ্যে নিজ দায়িত্বে ৩০০/- টাকার নন জুডিশিয়াল স্ট্যাম্পে চুক্তিপত্র সম্পাদন করবেন এবং সংশ্লিষ্ট উপজেলা/ইউনিয়ন ভূমি অফিস থেকে বিধি মোতাবেক দখল গ্রহণ করবেন। অন্যথায় পরবর্তীতে দখল দেয়ার বিষয়ে কোন প্রকার আপত্তি গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না।
৩৯. কোন অবস্থাতেই ইজারাকৃত বালুমহাল সাব-লিজ দেওয়া যাবে না।
৪০. সেক্ত, সড়ক, মহাসড়ক ও অন্যান্য এমন কোনো স্থান হতে বালু উত্তোলন গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সরকারি ও বেসরকারি স্থাপনার নিকটবর্তী স্থান এবং পরিবেশের ভারসাম্য বিনষ্ট করে করা যাবে না। পানি উন্নয়ন বোর্ড কর্তৃক নির্মিত বেড়ী ঝাঁক বা নদীর ঝাঁক/পাড়ের ক্ষতি সাধনকরা যাবে না। কোনো বালু মহালের টোহাঙ্গির মধ্যে ব্রিজ থাকলে তা হতে ৫০০ গজ বাদ দিয়ে বালু উত্তোলন করতে হবে এবং এ শর্ত ভঙ্গ করে ব্রিজের কোনো ক্ষতিসাধিত হলে সংশ্লিষ্ট ইজারাদারকে দায়ী করা হবে।
৪১. বালু উত্তোলনে কোন প্রকার মেশিন ব্যবহার করা যাবে না এবং বালুমহাল সীমানায় বালু মজুদ রাখা যাবে না।
৪২. বালুমহাল ও মাটি ব্যবস্থাপনা আইন, ২০২৩ ও বালুমহাল ও মাটি ব্যবস্থাপনা (সংশোধন) আইন ২০২৩ এবং বালুমহাল ও মাটি ব্যবস্থাপনা বিধিমালা, ২০২৫ এর যাবতীয় বিধিবিধান এবং সরকার কর্তৃক সময় সময় জারিকৃত যাবতীয় বিধিবিধান অনুসরণ করতে হবে।
৪৩. ইজারাদার বালুমহালের আয়তন হ্রাস বা বৃদ্ধি বা ক্ষতিসাধন করতে পারবেন না।
৪৪. কোন অবস্থাতেই বালু ব্যতীত মাটি বা অন্য কিছু উত্তোলন করা যাবে না।
৪৫. যে সকল বালুমহাল ইজারার বিষয়ে মন্ত্রণালয়ের স্থগিতাদেশ/স্থিতাবস্থার আদেশ/সিদ্ধান্তের অপেক্ষা/বিজ্ঞ দেওয়ানী আদালতের স্থগিতাদেশ/স্থিতাবস্থার/নিষেধাজ্ঞার আদেশ বলবৎ আছে সে সকল বালুমহালের ক্ষেত্রে অনুপূর্ণ আদেশ প্রত্যাহারের পর প্রচলিত নীতিমালা অনুসারে ইজারা কার্যক্রমের ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে। এতদ্ব্যতীত কোনো দাগের উপর কিংবা মহালের উপর বিজ্ঞ আদালতের স্থগিতাদেশ/স্থিতাবস্থার/নিষেধাজ্ঞার আদেশ থাকলে তা উল্লেখ করা না হলেও উহা ইজারা বাহির্ভূত থাকবে।
৪৬. বালুমহাল ইজারার মেয়াদ চলাকালীন আদালতের স্থগিতাদেশ/স্থিতাবস্থার/নিষেধাজ্ঞা বলবতের কারণে ইজারা গ্রহীতা ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হলে তার জন্য কোন প্রকার ক্ষতিপূরণ দাবি করতে পারবে না।
৪৭. বেসরকারি যে সময় যেকোনো সময় ইজারা প্রদান/দখল প্রদান করা হোক না কেন উক্ত ইজারার মেয়াদ ৩০শে চৈত্র ১৪৩৩ বঙ্গাব্দ পর্যন্ত কার্যকর হবে। কোন অবস্থাতেই মেয়াদ বর্ধিত করা হবে না কিংবা ৩০শে চৈত্র ১৪৩৩ বঙ্গাব্দ তারিখের পর বালুমহালের উপর ইজারাগ্রহীতার কোন স্বাধীন স্বার্থ থাকবে না এবং মহালটির দখল স্বয়ংক্রিয়ভাবে সরকারের উপর বর্তাবে।
৪৮. ইজারাগ্রহীতা কোনো ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠান উত্তোলিত বালু কোনোক্রমেই সর্বসাধারণের ব্যবহার্য রাস্তা বা রাস্তা সংলগ্ন স্থান, খোলার মাঠ, পার্ক বা উন্মুক্ত স্থানে তুলে আকারে রাখিয়া স্বাভাবিক চলাচলে বিঘ্ন ও জনদুর্ভোগ সৃষ্টি করিতে পারিবেন না।
৪৯. ইজারা গ্রহীতা কোনো ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠান উত্তোলিত বালু সংশ্লিষ্ট মালিক বা আইনানুগ ক্ষমতাপ্রাপ্ত ব্যক্তির অনুমতি ব্যতীত স্থানীয় জনগণের জায়গা জমিতে বা সরকারের জায়গা জমিতে তুলে আকারে রাখিতে পারিবেন না।
৫০. সরেজমিনে বালুমহালের বাস্তব অবস্থা দেখে আবেদন করতে/দরপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে। ইজারা গ্রহণের পর এ বিষয়ে কোন প্রকার ওজর আপত্তি উত্থাপন করলে তা গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না।
৫১. ভুল বা মিথ্যা তথ্য সম্বলিত এবং অসম্পূর্ণ/ ত্রুটিপূর্ণ দরখাস্ত/দরপত্র বিবেচনায়োগ্য নয়।
৫২. বালুমহালের ইজারা বন্দোবস্তের আবেদন মঞ্জুর/ না-মঞ্জুর/বাতিলের সুপারিশ প্রদানের ক্ষেত্রে কমিটি সর্বময় ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।
৫৩. অকৃতকার্য দরপত্রদাতার দাখিলকৃত জামানতের ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার জেলা বালুমহাল ব্যবস্থাপনা কমিটি সিদ্ধান্তের পর ফেরত দেওয়া হবে।
৫৪. দরপত্র বাস্তব খোলার তারিখে নির্ধারিত সময়ে জেলা প্রশাসকের সম্মেলন কক্ষে উপস্থিত দরপত্র দাতাদের (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকে) সম্মুখে দরপত্রসমূহ খোলা হবে।
৫৫. উপস্থিত শর্তাবলির যে কোনো এক বা একাধিক শর্তের ব্যত্যয় ঘটলে ইজারা বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে এবং সরকারি সম্পত্তির ক্ষতি সাধন করলে বালুমহাল ও মাটি ব্যবস্থাপনা আইন, ২০২৩ ও বালুমহাল ও মাটি ব্যবস্থাপনা (সংশোধন) আইন ২০২৩, বালুমহাল ও মাটি ব্যবস্থাপনা বিধিমালা, ২০২৫ এবং সরকারী দাবী আদায় আইন, ১৯১৩ এর মাধ্যমে সার্টিফিকেট মামলা দায়ের করে ক্ষতিপূরণ আদায়সহ আইনানুগ অন্যান্য ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে।
৫৬. কোনো কারণে দরপত্রের ব্যতিরেকে বিজ্ঞিত দাতা এ বিজ্ঞিত পরিবর্তন কিংবা বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।
৫৭. জীব-বৈচিত্র্য সংরক্ষণ ও পরিবেশ দূষণমুক্ত রাখতে হবে। নদী/খাল/ছড়ার ভূ-প্রাকৃতিক পরিবেশ, মৎস্য, জলজ প্রাণী বা উদ্ভিদ বিনষ্ট হলে বা হওয়ার আশঙ্কা থাকলে বালু উত্তোলন করা যাবে না।
৫৮. নির্ধারিত সীমানার বাহিরে কোন বালু উত্তোলন করা যাবে না। ইজারাদার সূর্যাস্ত হতে সূর্যোত্তকাল পর্যন্ত বালু উত্তোলন করতে পারবেন।
৫৯. নদী/খাল/ছড়ার তীর ভূমির ঢাল (Slope) যথাযথভাবে সংরক্ষণ করে বালু উত্তোলন করতে হবে। বালু উত্তোলনের ফলে নদীর তীর যাতে ভেঙে না যায় সেদিকে লক্ষ্য রাখতে হবে। উত্তোলনকৃত বালু কোনো অবস্থাতেই নদীর তীরে বা নদীতে ফেলা যাবে না।
৬০. অবৈধ বা অতিরিক্ত বালু উত্তোলনের ফলে নদী ভাঙনের সৃষ্টি হলে বা ঘর-বাড়ি, স্থাপনা, গাছ বা ফসল বিনষ্ট হলে বা পরিবেশ, প্রতিবেশ বা জীববৈচিত্র্যের ক্ষতি সাধিত হলে, অনুপূর্ণ ক্ষতির পরিমাণ নির্ণয় এবং ইজারা গ্রহীতার জামানত হতে ক্ষতিপূরণ আদায় পদ্ধতি নির্ধারণের ব্যবস্থা করা হবে।
৬১. ইজারাগ্রহীতা কর্তৃক বালু উত্তোলনের ফলে বালুমহাল এবং পার্শ্ববর্তী এলাকার প্রাকৃতিক/পরিবেশের ভারসাম্য নষ্ট হলে জেলা বালুমহাল ব্যবস্থাপনা কমিটি কোনো প্রকার কারণ দর্শনো ব্যতিরেকে উক্ত বালুমহাল ইজারা স্থগিত/বাতিল করতে পারবেন।

মোঃ আর মারীন
জেলা প্রশাসক
ও
সভাপতি
জেলা বালুমহাল ব্যবস্থাপনা কমিটি
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From infection to memory loss? New study sparks concern

Severe infections may quietly raise the risk of dementia later in life, a new study suggests, highlighting an often-overlooked link between physical illness and brain health.

Researchers analysing health records from Finland found that older adults who had serious infections such as urinary tract infections or other bacterial illnesses were more likely to develop dementia years later. The study reviewed data from more than 62,000 people with dementia and compared them with over 300,000 without the condition.

Notably, the increased risk remained even after accounting for other health problems, suggesting infections themselves may play a role. In many cases, these infections occurred five to six years before dementia was diagnosed.

Experts believe such illnesses might speed up underlying damage in the brain, though they stress the findings do not prove direct cause and effect.

The authors say better prevention and timely treatment of infections could potentially delay or reduce dementia risk, but further studies are needed to confirm this possibility.

Advances in surgical oncology bringing new hope to Bangladesh

DR TAREQ SALAHUDDIN

As cancer continues to rise across South Asia, global collaboration and advances in surgical oncology are offering new hope for patients. The 3rd SingHealth Peritoneal Surface Oncology Conference, organised by the Department of Sarcoma, Peritoneal and Rare Tumours (SPRinT) at the National Cancer Centre Singapore, brought together leading experts to share innovations in treating complex cancers, particularly those affecting the peritoneal surface. Among the contributors was Bangladeshi surgical oncologist Dr Hasan Shahriar Md Nuruzzaman (Kallol), who presented his team's early experience in managing advanced peritoneal malignancies—an area where treatment options have traditionally been limited.

Dr Kallol, an Associate Professor of Surgical Oncology at the National Institute of Cancer Research & Hospital (NICRH) in Dhaka, represents a growing cohort of Bangladeshi specialists striving to bridge the gap between global advances and local practice. With training in international centres, including the National Cancer Centre Singapore, his work focuses on improving outcomes for patients with complex cancers such as breast, gastrointestinal, and peritoneal malignancies.

In Bangladesh, cancer patterns reflect both global trends and local challenges. According to Dr Kallol, breast cancer remains the most common among women, followed by cancers of the cervix and uterus, while men frequently present with cancers of the lung, oesophagus, and stomach. However, a major limitation remains the absence of a comprehensive national cancer



Dr Hasan Shahriar Md Nuruzzaman (Kallol), along with the participants of the 3rd SingHealth Peritoneal Surface Oncology Conference at the National Cancer Centre Singapore.

registry, making it difficult to fully understand the burden of disease. While some institutional data exist, a coordinated, nationwide effort is still lacking—something he believes is both feasible and urgently needed.

One of the most pressing challenges is late diagnosis. Many patients initially seek care from informal providers or delay medical consultation, often arriving at specialised centres only when the disease has advanced. This delay significantly reduces the chances of successful treatment. Dr Kallol emphasises that early detection remains the most effective way to improve survival, urging greater public awareness and timely medical evaluation.

At the same time, surgical oncology has evolved dramatically over the past two decades. Procedures that were once highly invasive are now safer and more precise, with reduced blood loss and improved recovery. In breast cancer, for instance, many patients can now undergo breast-conserving surgery instead of complete removal. Similarly, advanced techniques such as cytoreductive surgery (CRS) combined with intraperitoneal chemotherapy are offering new possibilities for patients with peritoneal cancers—conditions that

previously carried a poor prognosis. Despite these advances, Bangladesh faces a critical shortage of specialised cancer surgeons. According to the GLOBOCAN 2022 (International Agency for Research on Cancer, WHO), Bangladesh records approximately about 167,000 new cancer cases per year. Dr Nuruzzaman highlights the need for long-term investment in training while also equipping general surgeons with basic oncological principles to bridge the gap in the interim.

Beyond technical expertise, he underscores the importance of communication and trust. Many patients remain skeptical about local treatment and seek care abroad, often unnecessarily. Clear communication, patient education, and a more compassionate approach, he argues, are essential to rebuilding confidence in the country's healthcare system.

Ultimately, the future of cancer care in Bangladesh depends not only on technology, but also on teamwork. Effective treatment requires close collaboration between surgeons, oncologists, radiologists, pathologists, and nurses. As global knowledge continues to expand, integrating these multidisciplinary approaches locally may be the key to transforming cancer outcomes in the country.

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BUSY BEE SYNDROME When busyness becomes a burden

PROF DR RUBAUL MURSHED

In a world where packed calendars signal success, a growing concern is emerging: "Busy Bee Syndrome," a pattern where constant activity masks deeper strain.

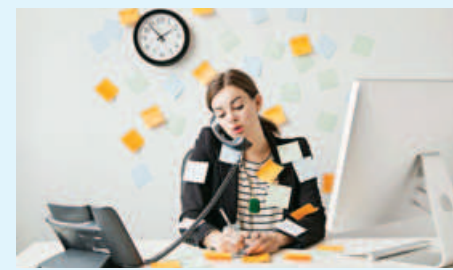
Many people today equate busyness with worth, wearing exhaustion as a badge of honour while treating rest as indulgence. Yet beneath this culture of endless motion lies a quieter cost. Remaining perpetually occupied keeps the body in a prolonged stress response, gradually draining energy, weakening immunity, and dulling mental clarity.

What appears as productivity can slowly spiral into burnout, anxiety, or even depression. Experts note that relentless scheduling often provides a sense of importance, reinforcing the idea that being needed equals being valuable. However, this constant engagement may also serve as an emotional shield.

By filling every moment with tasks, individuals avoid confronting loneliness, grief, or uncertainty. These unaddressed feelings do not vanish; they resurface as irritability, fatigue, and emotional distress over time.

The solution, researchers suggest, lies not in doing more, but in restoring balance. Human well-being depends on rhythm periods of effort followed by rest. As the pace of modern life accelerates, the quiet act of pausing may be the most essential habit of all for healthier minds and more meaningful lives today.

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ANTIBIOTICS LOSING POWER: A growing global health crisis

DR LOKIAT ULLAH

Antibiotics, once hailed as miracle drugs, are now facing a silent yet escalating threat called antibiotic resistance. This growing crisis, driven by misuse and overuse, is steadily weakening one of medicine's most powerful tools.

Used to treat infections caused by microorganisms, antibiotics are essential for recovery. Yet, physicians today are increasingly confronted with a troubling reality: many of these drugs are no longer effective. The World Health Organisation warns that by 2050, antibiotic resistance could claim over 10 million lives annually worldwide. What once cured infections with ease is now struggling to keep pace with evolving microbes.

The problem is particularly pressing in countries like Bangladesh, where regulations around antibiotic use are poorly enforced. Although antibiotics are meant to be dispensed only with a valid prescription, they are often sold freely. Drug shops frequently provide these medicines on request, with little regard for proper dosage or duration. This unregulated access fuels a dangerous cycle of misuse.

A major contributor to resistance is incomplete or inappropriate use. Patients often stop taking antibiotics once they feel better, unaware that this allows surviving microorganisms to adapt and become resistant. Over time, these resistant strains spread, making future infections harder and sometimes impossible to treat.

This growing resistance is already taking a toll. Patients suffer longer illnesses, healthcare costs rise, and physicians face mounting challenges in finding effective treatments. What appears to be a simple infection can turn into a prolonged, life-threatening condition.

Addressing this crisis requires collective responsibility. Awareness among the public is crucial. Antibiotics should never be taken without proper medical advice, and prescriptions must be strictly followed. Pharmacy owners, healthcare providers, and regulatory bodies must also play their part by ensuring responsible dispensing practices.

Antibiotics are not just medicines; they are vital weapons against disease. If misused, they risk becoming blunt tools, unable to protect those who need them most. The message is clear and urgent: safeguarding antibiotics today is essential for saving lives tomorrow.

The future of healthcare depends on it.

The write is a physician, medical researcher, and entrepreneur.

When stress shows on your teeth

DR ADILY ADIB KHAN

Mental health may not be the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about oral hygiene, yet growing evidence shows a clear and often overlooked connection between the two.

Stress and anxiety can quietly disrupt daily routines, making even simple habits like brushing and flossing feel overwhelming. As these routines slip, plaque and bacteria begin to build, leading to enamel damage, gum irritation, and persistent bad breath. What starts as emotional strain can quickly translate into visible dental problems.

One of the most striking links is "Bruxism"—the unconscious grinding or clenching of teeth,



often triggered by stress. This condition can occur during the day or while asleep, and over time it may lead to jaw pain, headaches, tooth damage, and even disturbed sleep. In some

cases, it becomes severe enough to affect daily functioning.

Stress also weakens the immune system, leaving gums more vulnerable to infection and increasing the risk of periodontal disease. Signs of bruxism may include chipped or flattened teeth, enamel erosion, jaw tightness, facial pain, and headaches around the temples. Many people may not realise they have the condition until noticeable damage occurs.

Management often requires both dental and psychological care. Dentists may recommend mouth guards to protect teeth, while lifestyle changes such as reducing caffeine, limiting alcohol, and quitting smoking can ease symptoms. Stress management techniques, including exercise, meditation, and therapy, are equally vital.

Maintaining social connections, spending time with loved ones, and engaging in meaningful activities can also support mental wellbeing. Interestingly, dentists are sometimes among the first to detect early signs of emotional distress through oral symptoms.

The message is simple yet powerful: caring for mental health is not separate from caring for physical health. A healthy mind supports a healthy smile, and together, they form the foundation of overall wellbeing.

The writer is the founder of Dental Pixel. Email: adily.adib@gmail.com

HEIGHT AND HEALTH: When being tall comes with hidden risks

Being tall may come with hidden health risks, according to new genetic research linking height to serious cardiovascular and reproductive conditions.

A large-scale analysis involving more than 120,000 East Asian individuals has found that greater height is associated with a higher risk of "atrial fibrillation"—an irregular and often rapid heart rhythm and "Endometriosis", a condition where tissue similar to the uterine lining grows outside the uterus. The findings, published in PLOS Genetics, highlight how the biology of height extends far beyond appearance.

Researchers identified nearly 300 genetic

variants linked to height and explored how these influence overall health. The study also found connections between height and traits such as lung function, body size, and reproductive patterns, including the age of menstruation onset.

While shorter individuals appeared less likely to develop endometriosis, experts stress that height itself is not a cause, but a marker shaped by complex genetic factors.

The findings may aid early risk prediction in future healthcare. However, researchers caution that further studies are needed before these insights can guide routine clinical decisions.



Too hot to move: Climate change driving global inactivity



Rising global temperatures may be quietly reshaping human behaviour and health by pushing millions towards physical inactivity, according to a new modelling study published in The Lancet Global Health.

As climate change intensifies heat exposure worldwide, researchers warn that even small increases in temperature could significantly reduce people's ability to stay active. Analysing data from 156 countries between 2000 and 2022, the study projects that by 2050, each additional month with average temperatures above 27.8°C could raise global physical inactivity by 1.5 percentage points.

The impact is expected to be more pronounced in low- and middle-income countries, where inactivity could rise even further. Regions such as Central America, the Caribbean, Eastern Sub-Saharan Africa, and Equatorial Southeast Asia may face the steepest increases, driven by prolonged exposure to extreme heat.

The consequences extend beyond lifestyle changes. Researchers estimate that rising inactivity linked to climate change could contribute to between 470,000 and 700,000 premature deaths annually, alongside billions of dollars in lost productivity. While these findings are based on projections, experts stress the urgency of action.

Measures such as designing cooler cities, expanding access to safe indoor exercise spaces, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions may help mitigate the growing health risks of a warming world.

Individual brilliancies light up friendlies

Florian Wirtz produced a masterclass with two goals and two assists as Germany edged Switzerland 4-3 in a thrilling friendly in Basel yesterday. Switzerland twice led through Dan Ndoye and Brel Embolo but Wirtz orchestrated Germany's response each time - setting up Jonathan Tah's first international goal and Serge Gnabry's equaliser. He then took centre stage, curling in a superb

strike to make it 3-2 before sealing victory with another stunning effort after Joel Monteiro had levelled.

In Buenos Aires, Argentina secured a tense 2-1 win over Mauritania. Enzo Fernandez opened the scoring before 21-year-old Nico Paz netted his first international goal with a left-footed free kick. Mauritania rallied late, with Jordan Lefort pulling one back,

despite Lionel Messi's second-half introduction.

Elsewhere, England drew 1-1 with Uruguay at home as Ben White scored but conceded a late penalty converted by Federico Valverde, while Spain beat Serbia 3-0, with Mikel Oyarzabal scoring twice thanks to two superb finishes and debutant Victor Munoz also on target at home.



PHOTOS: FACEBOOK/REUTERS



74 DAYS TO GO



Gazzaniga's masterpiece

When Brazil lifted their third World Cup title at the 1970 edition in Mexico, it was more than just another triumph, it marked the end of an era. By winning the title for a third time, Brazil earned the right to keep the iconic Jules Rimet Trophy forever. That historic moment created an unexpected challenge for world football. With the original prize - designed for the inaugural edition in 1930 - claimed, FIFA needed a new symbol of the game's greatest achievement ahead of the 1974 World Cup. What followed was a global search for a design worthy of football's grandest stage. Artists from seven countries submitted 53 different proposals, each attempting to capture the spirit and prestige of the World Cup. In the end, it was Italian sculptor Silvio Gazzaniga whose vision stood above the rest - a design that would go on to become one of the most recognisable trophies in all of sport.

****Visit The Daily Star website to also read "The Iceman's masterpiece: When Bergkamp painted history in three touches".**

Cabrera & Co hoping for win against Singapore

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach Javier Cabrera and his players believe they have the ability to beat Singapore in their final AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers fixture on Tuesday and salvage some pride by finishing the campaign in second position.

Bangladesh, currently third in the four-team Group C, have five points from five matches, while Singapore have already secured the lone qualifying spot from the group with 11 points. Hong Kong have eight while India are at the bottom with two.

The team arrived in Singapore on Thursday following a 3-0 defeat in a FIFA friendly away to Vietnam. The loss was a bruising one against the reigning Southeast Asian champions, but Cabrera believes the experience will stand his side in good stead ahead of the match at the National Stadium in Kallang.

"We wanted to have that tough test before coming here. Vietnam was a strong challenge. The result was disappointing, but I think



there were many positives to take. It was a very important experience against a much higher-ranked team," Cabrera said in a video message sent by the Bangladesh Football Federation on Friday, after the team's first training session in Singapore.

Midfielder Sheikh Morsalin, who was an unused substitute against Vietnam, believes the team will learn from their mistakes. Bangladesh were trailing 3-0 within the first 38 minutes, but an improved second-half display helped them avoid a heavier defeat.

"We had our expectations in Vietnam. We played well in the second half and even tried to dominate. So we will try to correct those mistakes with the aim of winning this match," Morsalin said.

Bangladesh lost to both Singapore (1-2) and Hong Kong (3-4), but beat India (1-0) at home. In contrast, Cabrera's charges have fared slightly better away from home, drawing both their matches against India (0-0) and Hong Kong (1-1). Their performances on the road have also shown more cohesion and spirit, something Morsalin believes they can carry into this match.

"There will be pressure, but our objective is to finish second with a win, as we have done well away from home. Victory is our only target," said the Bangladesh No. 7.

Cabrera echoed that belief, saying his team can get a positive result if they play to their full potential.

"If we take the best things from the match against Vietnam, I think we are going to be very competitive against Singapore," the Spaniard said. "If we are at our best and can improve on the small details - especially set-pieces, where we had some issues in the first game - it's going to be a very tight match, and we can get the three points."

National athletes set for financial boost

SPORTS REPORTER

Youth and Sports state minister Aminul Haque yesterday announced 129 national athletes will begin receiving a monthly financial allowance. The support will be officially inaugurated during Monday's ceremony at the Prime Minister's Office, where honorary 'Sports Cards' will also be distributed to those who achieved international success in 2025. While cricketers are largely excluded due to their existing financial stability, the scheme is expected to expand rapidly to support 500 athletes across various disciplines, including para-sports and grassroots talents.

Financial security: The programme is designed to turn sports into a viable career path, easing the financial burden on athletes' families.

Diverse representation: The initial phase covers 20 different disciplines, ranging from sepak takraw to carom and yoga.

Inclusive approach: Para-athletes are being given "highest importance" in this scheme, acknowledging their recent international achievements.

Merit-based & equal: Allowances are uniform across all sports to ensure equal respect; however, status and performance will be reviewed every four months.

Expansion plans: The scheme will soon grow to include 500 beneficiaries, alongside the launch of the 'Notun Kuri Sports' initiative in April to scout grassroots talent aged 12-14 across all 64 districts.



When sports become a profession, families gain security. With this vision, we are bringing national-level athletes under an allowance programme to ensure they can focus entirely on their performance... It will be a satisfactory figure that will motivate athletes to perform better, while also encouraging families to support their children in sports.

Aminul Haque, State Minister for Youth and Sports

SHORT CORNER

Dhoni to miss start of IPL season due to calf strain

Mahendra Singh Dhoni is expected to miss the opening two weeks of the Indian Premier League (IPL) season, the Chennai Super Kings said on Saturday. The 44-year-old, who led Chennai to five titles before relinquishing the captaincy in 2024, featured in all 14 of their matches last season, scoring a total of 196 runs as they finished bottom of the standings.

Ignore our celebrations, we respect Bosnian team: Dimarco

Federico Dimarco insisted on Saturday that Italy respect Bosnia and Herzegovina, after he and team-mates were caught on camera celebrating when their opponents reached the World Cup qualifying final by beating Wales. Italy will attempt to end their World Cup exile when they meet Bosnia and Herzegovina on Tuesday in Zenica.

****Read full stories on The Daily Star website.**



Fahim, Ronan help Bangladesh turn corner in India draw

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh came from behind to hold India to a 1-1 draw in their final Group B match of the SAFF U-20 Championship in Male yesterday, with Group A champions Nepal awaiting them in Wednesday's semifinals.

Both sides finished on four points, with India topping the three-team group on goal difference, while Bangladesh advanced as runners-up.

At Maldives' National Stadium, defending champions India took the lead in the 17th minute through Vishal Yadav, who headed in from an Omang Dodum corner. Bangladesh, already assured of a last-four spot, struggled to match India's control early on, with coach Mark Cox's side forced into a reshuffle after Ashikur Rahman went off injured midway through the first half.

The game grew increasingly physical, with multiple scuffles disrupting play and leading to the dismissals of Cox and India goalkeeping coach Sandeep Nandi from the dugout.

Bangladesh found their response deep into first-half stoppage time, once again through the influence of Ronan Sullivan. The 18-year-old Philadelphia Union Academy forward, who had struck a decisive brace against Pakistan in the opener, proved pivotal yet again with his delivery - whipping in a teasing, swerving corner that Abdul Riyad Fahim met with a composed far-post volley to restore parity.

India enjoyed the better of the second half and created clearer chances, with Dodum going close on more than one occasion, but Bangladesh held firm despite lacking a cutting edge in attack.



BSRM
THE ONLY STEEL FACTORY IN BANGLADESH TO RECEIVE THE
GREEN FACTORY AWARD 2025



SHAH CEMENT
BANGLADESH'S
NO. 1 CEMENT BRAND

21 Bangladeshis survive boat tragedy off Greece coast

At least 22 die after six-day ordeal at sea

AFP, Athens

Twenty-one Bangladeshi migrants have survived a boat tragedy off the coast of Greece that killed at least 22 fortune-seekers.

The Greek coastguard, citing survivors, late Friday said 26 people, including a woman and a minor, were rescued by a European border agency vessel off the island of Crete. Apart from the Bangladeshis, four South Sudanese and a Chadian citizen had emerged from the ordeal alive.

Survivors said the bodies of those who had died were thrown into the Mediterranean Sea on the orders of one of the people smugglers aboard the ship.

Two survivors were taken to a hospital in Heraklion on Crete, the coastguard said. The nationality of the deceased could not be ascertained immediately.

Based on survivor statements, the
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Vehicles, mostly buses carrying Eid holidaymakers returning to Dhaka, wait in bumper-to-bumper traffic on and under the Mayor Hanif flyover in Jatrabari yesterday.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

MPs rebuke transport boss for loose talk

PM orders stern action against fuel hoarders at BNP parliamentary party meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several lawmakers yesterday criticised the performance of Sheikh Rabiul Alam, the minister for road transport and bridges, railways and shipping, and also raised concerns about some of his remarks in the media.

The development came at a meeting of the BNP Parliamentary Party held at the Jatiya Sangsad, The Daily Star has learned from people informed with the discussions.

They told him to be more careful while speaking in public, saying that his words should be clear, measured and helpful.

People want to see both careful words and visible action from the minister, they said, while asking him to focus more on showing the government's positive steps in the transport sector, especially work that can ease public worries and build trust.

In recent days many accidents have occurred, leaving
SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Russian strikes kill 4 in Ukraine, damage port

AFP, Kyiv

Russian air attacks across Ukraine early yesterday killed at least four people and damaged critical infrastructure, including a port and a maternity hospital, authorities said, as Russia's pressed on with its war with Ukraine.

In southern port city of Odesa, two people were killed and at least 13 wounded, Sergiy Lysak, head of the city's military administration, said, adding one of the hits damaged a maternity hospital roof.



A port in the Odesa region was also damaged in the shelling, after several hits were recorded on its infrastructure, Ukraine's state ports authority said.

Russia launched 273 drones at Ukraine overnight, 252 of which were shot down, the Ukrainian air force said on Saturday.

In Kryvyi Rih, a man was killed in a morning strike that hit an industrial enterprise, said Oleksandr Ganzha, head of the Dnipro regional administration. He said fires erupted at the site.

In the central Poltava region, one person was killed after Russian drones hit a residential building and industrial facilities, regional authorities said.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Dhaka seeks EU help for LDC grad deferment

Muktadir raises issue at WTO meet

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA,
from Yaounde in Cameroon

Bangladesh yesterday sought the European Union's support for deferring its graduation from the group of least developed countries.

Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktadir raised the issue at a bilateral meeting with Maros Sefcovic, EU Trade Commissioner, on the sidelines of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference in Yaounde, Cameroon.

Speaking to The Daily Star after the meeting, Muktadir said, "We have sought EU support for the deferment as we need it."

Bangladesh will need backing from a majority of UN member countries at the upcoming General Assembly in September in New York to secure a three-year deferment.

"We are hopeful that not only the EU, but other countries will support us in securing the deferment," the minister said.

Last month, the UN Committee for Development Policy, initiated a process to

Nepal ensures 33% women representation in cabinet

Ex-PM Oli, ex-home minister arrested over protest deaths

AGENCIES

The newly formed 15-member Nepali cabinet has five female ministers, ensuring 33 percent representation of women for the first time, as enshrined in the country's constitution.

Rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah was sworn in as prime minister of Nepal on Friday, tasked with restoring political stability and creating jobs in the poor Himalayan nation long troubled by fragile governments and weak growth prospects.

His move to appoint one-third women ministers to the cabinet has been hailed as a historic step toward inclusive governance.

The five women ministers appointed are Sobita Gautam (law, justice and parliamentary affairs), Pratibha Rawal (general administration), Sita Badi (women and children), Nisha Mehta (health and population), and Geeta Chaudhary (agriculture).

Meanwhile, Nepal's former prime minister, KP Sharma Oli, was arrested yesterday as police investigate whether he was negligent in failing to prevent dozens of deaths in a crackdown on Gen Z-led anti-corruption protests last September, officials said.

Oli's arrest, which his lawyer



“It is the beginning of justice. The country will take a new direction now.”
Sudan Gurung, home minister

said was illegal and sparked protests by supporters who clashed with police, followed rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah's swearing in as prime minister on Friday and a recommendation by a panel investigating violence during the protests that he should be prosecuted for negligence.

His former home minister, Ramesh Lekhak, was also arrested.

Seventy-six people were killed last September during a police crackdown and arson and violent unrest during the protests, which led to Oli's resignation.

After his arrest, supporters staged protest rallies and clashed with police who tried to stop them burning tyres near the prime minister's office. Police lobbed a teargas shell and used batons to break up the protests, injuring one person, witnesses said.

Oli's Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) called his arrest illegal and said it was an act of "revenge". It demanded his immediate release and said more protests were planned for Sunday.

Shankar Pokhrel, a senior party official, told reporters that protest notes against the arrest would be handed to the government in all 77 districts of the country today.

Home Minister Sudan Gurung dismissed the criticism, saying on Facebook: "It is the beginning of justice. The country will take a new direction now."

Oli was prime minister four times between 2015 and 2025 but never served a full five-year term. In 2020, he published a new political map that included a small stretch of disputed land controlled by India, giving him a popularity boost in Nepal.

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Educationist Dilara Hafiz dies at 77

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Veteran educator Dilara Hafiz, the wife of Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, died while undergoing treatment in Singapore yesterday.

She was 77. Survived by her husband, son, daughter, grandchildren, and a host of admirers, she breathed her last at Singapore General Hospital at 11:29am local time.

Her body will be brought back to Bangladesh this evening (March 29), after which her namaz-e-janaza will be held at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad tomorrow at 11:00am, the parliament secretariat said in a release.

Dilara Hafiz was born on January 2, 1949, in Sunamganj. Her father was

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Arctic sea ice just dropped to an alarming new low

CNN

Right now, the Arctic is maxing out on sea ice — the cold of winter has built up over months of darkness, and ice has spread as far south as it will all year. It's the North Pole's sea ice maximum, except this year, it's alarmingly low.

There is roughly half a million square miles of ice missing in this year's "max," compared to average — an amount twice the size of Texas.

It's the latest profoundly worrying signal from the top of the planet, a region which has become a clear victim of the climate crisis as humans burn fossil fuels, and increasingly a geopolitical hotspot as melting ice opens up commercial and military opportunities.

Winter is when Arctic ice builds up, typically reaching its maximum extent in March. This year, when scientists from NASA and the National Snow and Ice Data Center measured it on March 15, they found the ice had reached 5.52 million square miles — roughly nine percent lower than the average between 1981 and 2010.



PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Kalai ruti had once been known as the food of day labourers but now the Chapainawabganj ruti is famous in almost all corners of the country. Renowned eateries in Rajshahi now serve kalai ruti, made by cooks from Chapainawabganj, with green chilli chutney and smashed brinjal. Customers can also order beef tripe, mutton, beef and duck meat with kalai ruti. This photo was taken yesterday at Rajshahi city's Upshohor.

'Cuba is next' Says Trump, denies losing MAGA support over Iran war

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump said Friday "Cuba is next" in his latest threat against the Caribbean island, as he dismissed concerns that recent American military actions would cost him political support.

Cuba's communist government has faced mounting pressure from Trump, who imposed a de facto oil blockade in January and mused about "taking" the country.

Speaking at the Saudi-backed FII Priority investment forum in Miami, Trump said his Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement wanted "strength" and "victory," citing the January raid where US forces seized Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro.

"I built this great
SEE PAGE 8 COL 3